31940

National Library of Canada | Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

CANADIAN THESES ON MICROFICHE | THÈSES CANADIENNES SUR MICROFICHE

NAME OF AUTHOR/*NOM DE L'AUTEUR* PETER RUTHERFORD BLAIKIE

TITLE OF THESIS/*TITRE DE LA THÈSE* NATIONAL INTERESTS AND CONTRACTARIAN CONSIDERATIONS OF JUSTICE

UNIVERSITY/*UNIVERSITÉ* ALBERTA

DEGREE FOR WHICH THESIS WAS PRESENTED/*GRADE POUR LEQUEL CETTE THÈSE FUT PRÉSENTÉE* Ph.D.

YEAR THIS DEGREE CONFERRED/*ANNÉE D'OBTENTION DE CE GRADE* 1977

NAME OF SUPERVISOR/*NOM DU DIRECTEUR DE THÈSE* WALLY CUNNINS, ASSOC. PROF.

Permission is hereby granted to the NATIONAL LIBRARY OF CANADA to microfilm this thesis and to lend or sell copies of the film.

The author reserves other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's written permission.

L'autorisation est, par la présente, accordée à la BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DU CANADA de microfilmer cette thèse et de prêter ou de vendre des exemplaires du film.

L'auteur se réserve les autres droits de publication; ni la thèse ni de longs extraits de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans l'autorisation écrite de l'auteur.

DATED/*DATÉ* Jan. 20, 1977 SIGNED/*SIGNÉ* Peter R Blaikie

PERMANENT ADDRESS/*RÉSIDENCE FIXE* 10956 - 84 Ave.
Edmonton, Alberta.

NL-91 (3-74)

National Library of Canada

Cataloguing Branch
Canadian Theses Division

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

Direction du catalogage
Division des thèses canadiennes

NOTICE

The quality of this microfiche is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us a poor photocopy.

Previously copyrighted materials (journal articles, published tests, etc.) are not filmed.

Reproduction in full or in part of this film is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30. Please read the authorization forms which accompany this thesis.

THIS DISSERTATION
HAS BEEN MICROFILMED
EXACTLY AS RECEIVED

AVIS

La qualité de cette microfiche dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de mauvaise qualité.

Les documents qui font déjà l'objet d'un droit d'auteur (articles de revue, examens publiés, etc.) ne sont pas microfilmés.

La reproduction, même partielle, de ce microfilm est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30. Veuillez prendre connaissance des formules d'autorisation qui accompagnent cette thèse.

LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ
MICROFILMÉE TELLE QUE
NOUS L'AVONS REÇUE

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

NATIONAL INTERESTS AND CONTRACTARIAN CONSIDERATION OF JUSTICE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

BY

© PETER R. BLAIKIE

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING, 1977

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled National Interests and Contractarian Considerations of Justice in International Relations

submitted by PETER R. BLAIKIE

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science.

.....
Supervisor

.....

.....

.....

.....
External Examiner

Date November 25, 1976

DEDICATION

For Lesley, my parents, and our psittacine friends.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Don Carmichael, Wally Cummins, Alan Davidson, Juris Lejnieks, and Tom Pocklington have made incisive remarks throughout the text.

The University of Alberta and the Province of Alberta have provided generous funding for the completion of this project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 1

CHAPTER 2 10

Introduction 10

A. The National Interest as General and Subjectively Determined Values. 13

B. The National Interest as General and Objectively Determined Values. 21

C. The National Interest as Specific and Objectively Determined Values. 29

CHAPTER 3 34

A. The Idea of Interest 34

B. Brian Barry's Idea of Interest 39

CHAPTER 4 49

Introduction 49

A. Points of Congruence with Brian Barry. 53

B. Broadening the Scope of Interest in International Relations. 55

1. National Interests as Circumstances. 55

2. Interest Maintenance 56

3. Conflicts of Interest. 57

4. National Interests in Interaction. 59

C. Problems of Application. 60

D. The Pursuit of National Interests. 65

CHAPTER 5 67

Introduction 67

A. Attempts to Deduce a Conception of Justice in Traditional Political Philosophy 68
1. Utilitarian Assumptions. 68
2. Contractarian Assumptions. 75
B. Motivation and Rationality of Decision-Makers. 81
C. The Conditions of International Society. 86
D. Conclusion 91
CHAPTER 6 95
Introduction 95
A. The Contract Model in International Relations: A Justification. 96
B. Identification and Nature of Contractees 102
C. The Nature of the Choice Problem 103
1. The Veil of Ignorance. 104
2. Formal Conditions on the Choice of Principles. 109
D. Conclusion 111
CHAPTER 7 113
Introduction 113
A. The First Principle. 114
B. The Worth of Political Sovereignty 126
CHAPTER 8 128
Introduction 128
A. The Second Principle 129
B. The Difference Principle and Utilitarianism. 137
C. Priority of the First Principle. 140
CHAPTER 9 - Conclusions 144

BIBLIOGRAPHY 155

APPENDIX 164

CHAPTER 1

States remain the most important units of the international system. Although other actors such as individuals, international organizations and multi-national corporations are commanding increased attention among international scholars, the actual behavior of states continues to draw the lion's share of attention in the literature.[1] This attention is well-founded as states still control the majority of resources which are invested in the control of international behavior.

This dissertation is divided into two parts. In the first part, two questions are addressed: first, if states are the most important units of the international system, then what is the most important activity of states?; second, how is this activity to be conceptualized or understood? The second part of the dissertation poses a normative problem for inter-state relations: what principles of justice would decision-makers accept for the future regulation of state activity? The nature of state activity sets the limits of a theory of justice for international society. That is, in ascertaining what decision-makers do, and what they want to maximize, one is in a better position to assess the kinds of principles that would be acceptable to them.

Some international scholars say that generalizations cannot be made about the activities of all states.[2] Those who argue from this point of

---

[1] Though states do not pursue opportunities or goals independent of the decision-makers within them, the 'state-as-actor' approach is adopted metaphorically throughout the dissertation.

[2] See, for example, Hedley Bull, "International Theory: The Case for a Classical Approach," in Knorr and Rosenau, Contending Approaches to International Politics, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 20-38.

view say that since each state varies in economic capacity, resources and power, hypotheses about state activity in general deny the rich detail and unique differences among states. They might add that while it is possible to make statements about a state's behavior based on history, case studies and institutional structures, it is impossible to go further and to make useful systems level statements about the behavior of all states.

This is a reasonable objection. After all, how is it possible to compare the awesome power of the United States with that of the fledgling states of Africa? In response to this objection, it will be argued that although states differ immensely in resources, it does not follow that state activity varies in regard to the pursuit of these assets. Decision-makers of all states do adopt acts and policies which are intended to increase their assets.[3] Common to the behavior of all states, then, regardless of their wealth, power and status, is a striving for an increase in assets. It will be further argued that once a state increases one or more of these assets it has increased its opportunities for gain in the international system and control over other states' behavior.[4] Such increased opportunities are defined in chapter four as being in a state's

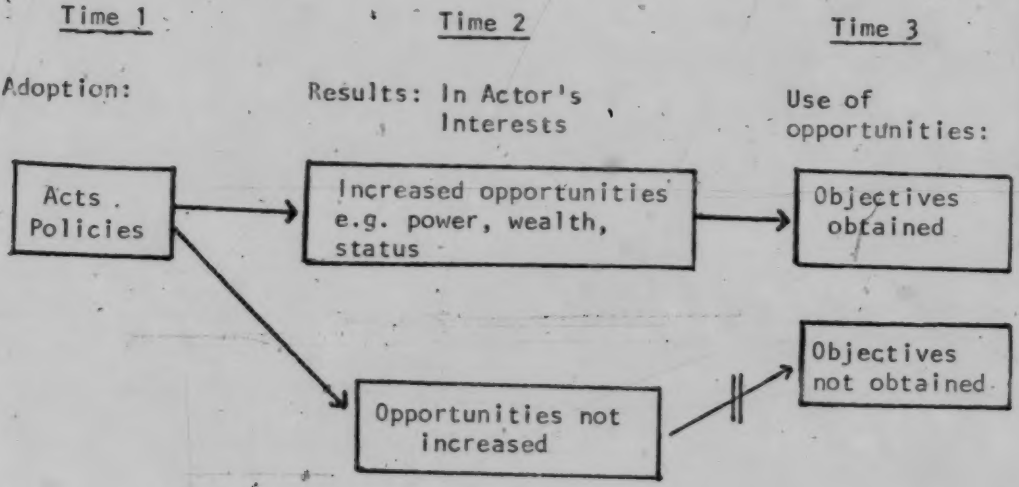
---

[3] Acts and policies are considered to be action-oriented rather than static. A policy is a course of action involving a series of acts over a period of time. The acts and policies of a state's foreign policy are means to the realization of objectives.

[4] James Rosenau sees foreign policy similarly: "No doubt the foreign policies of some modernizing elites are especially designed to divert attention from domestic problems, but they are also intended to maximize control over the international environment and must thus be adjusted to shifts on the world scene." James Rosenau, "Pre-theories and Theories of Foreign Policy," in James Rosenau, The Scientific Study of Foreign Policy (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1971), p. 100.

interests. All states seek increased opportunities as means to the realization of immediate and remote objectives. The most important activity of states is the adoption of acts and policies designed to promote what is in their national interests.

The following diagram illustrates this aspect of state activity:



Acts and policies adopted at Time 1 (T_1) represent the means of foreign policy. As stated above, results of acts and policies are in an actor's national interests (T_2) if they increase its opportunities to gain in the international system. Whether or not the stated objectives of states are obtained (T_3) is irrelevant to a determination of what is in a state's interests. Whether a state realizes immediate and remote objectives, having acted in a particular manner or through adopting a particular policy, depends on how successful it is in utilizing its opportunities. However, increased opportunities are always in a state's national interests because they increase the state's ability to realize its ends, no matter how these are formulated. Immediate objectives include the more tangible ends of foreign policy conduct. Prevalent among these are increased trade and economic benefits. Remote objectives might include

peace, "the good life", and justice in the relations between states. These opportunities can be applied to promote immediate or remote objectives.

Immediate objectives are not a means to remote objectives, though they may be a condition for them. For example, in U.S.-Canadian relations the Auto-Pact, an immediate objective, may be regarded as a condition for better relations between the two states, a long run objective. But goals, whether immediate or remote, are static. Thus, it cannot be said that better relations will result automatically from gaining an immediate objective. The key to gaining further goals, based on immediate goals obtained, is activity. Certain acts and policies create increased opportunities for realizing objectives. These opportunities create a resource base from which further goals can be pursued. The central point to be recognized is that these further objectives, whether immediate or remote, cannot be pursued, no less reached, without further initiative, decision and activity on the part of the state's decision-makers. Therefore, immediate goals obtained may be a condition, but are never a means, for satisfying further goals. In the U.S.-Canadian situation Ottawa and Washington must continue to initiate new policies beyond the base created by the Auto-Pact if the long range objective of establishing better relations is to be realized.

Another example of what is in a state's national interests may be seen in the Cuban military presence in Angola.

Act: Sending troops to Angola.

Policy: Supporting African Nationalist Movements.

In Actor's Interests: Increased status in Africa as a result of previous acts and policies.

Immediate Objectives: Building relationships of friendship with African states; increasing trade; demonstrating continued solidarity with Russian Foreign Policy.

This act of the Cuban government increased its overall status in Africa. Status is a means for Cuba to gain a better position in the international system. Therefore, the results of Cuban involvement in Angola are in Cuba's national interests. Whether the increased status is utilized in a manner which facilitates the realization of Cuba's immediate or remote objectives is irrelevent to the determination of what is or is not in Cuba's interests. It is always preferable to have increased opportunities, even if their ultimate use does not fulfill national objectives.

The second part of the dissertation proposes a tentative answer to the following question: What principles of justice would decision-makers of states agree to, given the knowledge that the central activity of states is the pursuit of increased opportunities?

At least one objection may be raised against a discussion of justice in international relations. It can be argued that the present structure of the international system does not readily admit the possibility of realizing principles of justice. Empirical data about the disparities between states and the refusal of states to abrogate the rights of sovereignty would seem to support this argument. As a result, scholars have devoted scant attention to normative problems in international relations, especially since World War II.[5] This war helped bring about the

---

[5]There are several noteworthy exceptions. See E. H. Carr, The Twenty Year's Crisis; Arnold Wolfers, Discord and Collaboration; Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society; and for a recent view see George Modelski's Principles of World Politics.

collapse of the pre-war idealism which refused to consider the real conditions of international society.

Contrary to this objection, there are several grounds for investigating the possible relationships between national interests and justice. First, the dearth of literature in this area serves as a *prima facie* justification for an inquiry into the idea of justice between states. Second, due to this lack of attention students of international relations are ill-equipped to discuss alternative international structures. Interest in avoiding future wars has generated the intensive study of conflict resolution and given birth to the new area of peace research. While the literature in both areas is voluminous, scholars seldom ask: peace for what?; conflict resolution for what?. The question they must ultimately address is the following: what is the aim of this research? Thus, scholars in both areas of inquiry should ask important philosophic and normative questions about the nature of the societies they envision. Third, a discussion of justice in international relations may, indeed, provide alternative structures for the organization of international society. Instead of affirming the present, principles of justice would question the very existence of the international structure of relationships. What kind of structures are available, given the nature of state activity? On what basis ought states be related to each other? What principles might decision-makers choose as a way of ordering state relationships? In asking these questions the student of international relations is forced to look beyond the current practices of states.

One of the tasks of political theorists has been to develop procedures and rules for determining the just or unjust functioning of domestic institutions. Few scholars see institutional practices within

states functioning justly, yet theories of justice are still developed which aid in understanding current practices and help in the search for alternatives.[6] The second part of the dissertation is intended to be a contribution to the normative literature in international relations.

Pursuit of opportunity is the central activity of independent states in the international system. States seek opportunities which increase the likelihood of their realizing immediate and remote objectives. Principles will be proposed for the future ordering of interstate conduct. Any principles proposed must contend with the central activity of states, the pursuit of increased opportunities. A normative discussion which eliminated this aspect of state activity would be blind to the realities of the international system. Regulative principles for the design of future international society can, however, prescribe how those opportunities may be obtained and what they may be used for. It is the task of a theory of international justice to fashion those limits.

The idea of an international society implies at least a minimum of rules or procedures which are a condition for its existence.[7] These rules or procedures serve as a constraint on the pursuit of increased opportunities. A second constraint is the existence of other states in the system. Thus, increased opportunities are sought within an international context of rules and contingencies that tend to limit their pursuit. Without even the minimal framework for the pursuit of opportunities

---

[6] John Rawls' A Theory of Justice is the most recent attempt to produce a theory of justice. I borrow many ideas from Rawls to develop a modified theory of contractarian justice for international relations in the second part of this dissertation.

[7] See W. Friedmann, Legal Theory (N.Y.: Columbia Univ. Press, 1967), p. 26.

that exists today, decision-makers would be subject to infinite confusions in their foreign policy deliberations. They would seldom know how to react without knowing the basis for other states acts and policies. It would make as little sense to refer to states establishing increased opportunities without some concept of rules as it would be to relate someone catching a touchdown pass independent of the rules of football.[8] Opportunities are not pursued in a vacuum, independent of a state's conception of order in international society. The main thrust of this dissertation is not with the content of present rules adopted by states in their attempts to order the international system. Neither is it with the systemic, environmental conditions that influence a decision-maker's choice of acts and policies. Rather, the object is to determine and understand the fundamentals of present state activity and then to develop principles of justice to order future activity.

To further this objective, the applicability of John Rawls' A Theory of Justice to the international environment is examined. I assess the strengths and weaknesses of the application of an essentially domestic conception of justice to the field of international relations. Having concluded that it can be applied, an amended version of Rawls' contractarian theory is related to the international environment.

The dissertation is divided into two sections: in the first section national interests are studied (Chapters 2, 3, 4). In the second section connections between what is in a state's national interests and Rawls' concept of justice are explored (Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8). In chapter

---

[8] John Rawls offers a similar analogy in his "Two Concepts of Rules," Philosophical Review, Vol. 64 (1955), pp. 3-32.

two previous usages of the national interest in the literature are examined and criticized. In an appendix to chapter two those authors in the field who are opposed to the application of national interest terminology in academic studies are discussed. Chapter three is devoted to an analysis of the philosophical literature on interests. In chapter four an original concept of what is in a state's national interests is set out. In chapter five special assumptions are made about the motivation and rationality of decision-makers in the international system. Also, the conditions of international society are discussed. Chapter six places decision-makers in an original setting where they are to choose principles for the future regulation of inter-state activity. In chapter seven the first of two principles of justice is presented. It is argued that decision-makers in a fictional setting would choose a principle of equality between states. Chapter eight is devoted to the second principle of justice, a principle for the distribution of the goods in international society.

Finally, a conclusion is reached regarding what are in states' national interests and contractarian considerations of justice in international relations. The original contract situation limits the pursuit of opportunities which decision-makers, in fact, seek to increase in order to realize their states' more immediate and specific aims. Yet at the same time, the possibility for just relations between states is constrained by these very same interests. It is contended that by focusing on a contractarian procedure for deriving principles of justice in the international system, the student of international relations is taken beyond the possibilities offered in contemporary literature.

CHAPTER 2

The Concept of Interest in Recent International Literature

Introduction

In the field of international relations, the literature that addresses the problem of defining and explaining the concept of the national interest is so varied that it is difficult to order. Some authors utilize the term to refer to the ends of a national society, others to the immediate aims of foreign policy, and yet again others to some presumably objective determinant in international relations such as security, power or national advantage.

There are further reasons why it is difficult to order the concept into several coherent meanings. First, several writers define "the national interest" using the same terms, yet understand these terms differently. As an example, there is debate in the discipline over the meaning of power, yet several writers explain "the national interest" in terms of power.[1] Second, sometimes the "national interest" is defined specifically while at others it is defined very generally. For example, one author equates national interests with desired outcomes[2], while others assert that only certain specific outcomes are in a state's interest,

---

[1] For several different definitions see Robert Dahl, Modern Political Analysis, Third Edition (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976) pp. 25-41.

[2] Joseph Frankel, National Interest (London, England: Macmillan Company, 1970), p. 18.

such as national security.[3] Third, the decision-making school has added complexity to the concept in the distinction it makes between objective and subjective interests. A subjective interest is one that decision-makers perceive to be in existence. An objective interest is one that exists whether or not the actors are aware of it. The decision-making school follows the subjective approach, contending that only the actor can define his situation and, therefore, his interests.[4] Fourth, sometimes national interests are used to describe the goals of state conduct in international relations and at other times they are constructed so as to include the means of obtaining goals.[5] Fifth, some analysts imbue the idea of "the national interest" with cooperative or other-directed efforts while others suggest that the concept applies only to self-directed state activity.[6]

It should not be surprising, given this wide umbrella under which the expression, the national interest, has been considered that important authors have more recently designated the concept as meaningless, eclectic,

---

[3] Hans Morgenthau says that "the national interest" of a peace-loving country "can only be defined in terms of national security". Hans Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, 4th edition (N.Y.: Alfred Knopf, 1966), p. 542.

[4] See Richard Snyder et. al. (eds.), Foreign Policy Decision Making: An Approach to the Study of International Politics (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1962), pp. 71-74.

[5] Vernon Van Dyke argues that in one context it is appropriate to view an interest as an end in itself while in another the interest is best expressed as a means to other ends. Vernon Van Dyke, "Values and Interests", American Political Science Review, LVI (No. 3, Sept., 1962), 567-576.

[6] For example, Reinhold Niebuhr and Arnold Wolfers extend the meaning of the term, "the national interest", to include cooperative efforts while Robert Osgood limits the concept to self-directed efforts.

and unsusceptible to analytical study.[7] But before it is possible to consider the rationale behind this attack, it is mandatory that the idea of the national interest, as presented by its leading exponents, be categorized coherently.

The following classifications are intended to reproduce the major meanings of the national interest as found in the international literature. In the first category the national interest is defined as general and subjectively determined values. A general value is one that is not specific; no particular value, such as security or power, takes precedence over all the rest. Subjective values are those expressed and solely determined by decision-makers. In the second category the national interest is defined in terms of general and objectively determined values. An objectively determined value is one that scholars or outsiders can perceive independently of the perceptions of decision-makers. In the third category the national interest is defined as specific and objectively determined values. Scholars that write on the national interest tend to fall into the above categories as follows:

A. The National interest as general and subjectively determined values:	Andrew Scott Vernon Van Dyke Joseph Frankel Morton Kaplan
B. The National interest as general and objectively determined values:	Robert Osgood Reinhold Niebuhr Arnold Wolfers
C. The National interest as specific and objectively determined values:	Hans Morgenthau George Kennan

---

[7] See appendix.

In the exposition which follows, each author's concept of the national interest will be evaluated on its own merits.

A. The National Interest as General and Subjectively Determined Values

The international literature is replete with examples of national interests being considered as roughly equivalent to, or synonomous with, general and subjective values. Vernon Van Dyke, for example, argues that interests and values have approximately the same meaning.[8] Andrew Scott says that, "[a]n interest is any value important to an actor that it wishes to attain, preserve or increase."[9] Morton Kaplan writes that, "[t]he interest of a system is to obtain the valuable," and that "[t]he interest of a nation is to satisfy national needs."[10] And one recent author has described the national interest as belonging "...to the age-long stream of philosophical speculation about the good state and the good society."[11]

Several difficulties emerge when "the national interest" is defined solely in terms of general and subjectively identified values. Let us consider Scott's definition since it amplifies several problems that arise when interests are viewed in this way. To paraphrase, he says:

1. An interest is any value important to an actor that it wishes to attain, preserve, or increase.

2. The interests of actors may be held in common, conflict, or be irrelevant to one another.

---

[8] Vernon Van Dyke, op. cit., p. 576.

[9] Andrew Scott, The Functioning of the International Political System (London: Macmillan Company, 1967), p. 126.

[10] Morton Kaplan, System and Process in International Politics (N.Y.: John Wiley and Sons, 1957), p. 151, p. 161.

[11] Joseph Frankel, op. cit., p. 45.

3. Actors have common interests when they share a set of common values and when the pursuit or achievement of its preferred alternatives by one actor contributes to the pursuit or achievement of the preferred alternatives of another.

4. Actors have conflicting interests when their values conflict and when the achievement by one actor of its preferred policy anternatives excludes those of another.[12]

The author at first equates interests with any values important to an actor. It is uncertain whether this is meant to be a definitional claim about the national interest. If it is meant to be definitional, then a state has as many interests as it has values. Note, however, that Scott says these values must be wished by the actor to be attained, preserved or increased. In other words, an interest does not exist for the actor if it is not actually disposed toward attaining, preserving or increasing it. If an interest is any value important to the actor, then it is unlikely that an interest could exist that was not perceived by the actor because actors are usually aware of the values important to them. It is noteworthy that an outside observer could not find that 'x' is or is not in A's national interests independently of the decision-makers of state A.

This subjective definition is at least inconsistent with Scott's predilection toward an objective definition of conflicts of interest. Scott claims that, "[a] conflict of interest may be perceived by an observer even though neither actor involved perceives it."[13] He goes even further than a mere perception of interest conflict: "The policy alternatives of two actors may, in fact, be incompatible even though

---

[12] Andrew Scott, op. cit., pp. 126-127.

[13] Ibid., p. 127.

neither actor perceives the incompatibility."[14] If a conflict of interest can be observed independently of the perceptions of decision-makers, then why is it not possible for national interests to be similarly perceived by observers? Scott does not answer this question. He is saying that to have a conflict of interest at lea t two actors must have previously established for themselves that the values they are seeking are important. However, even after these values are seen to be important, it is possible that the actors involved still may not be aware of any incompatibility of values between themselves and others. This is how a conflict of interest may evolve, according to Scott. This presents a problem: If a national interest is any of a number of values important to an actor and since those values are not selected and articulated in a vacuum, then an actor would not choose values without being aware of the common or conflicting values of other actors. If Scott is arguing that values or interests can be chosen solely on the basis of intrinsic merit, ignoring the values of other actors, it is incumbent upon him to explain how this can occur. It may clearly be in Canada's interest to reduce substantially energy exports to the U.S. when viewed solely from the point of view of Canada's domestic well-being. Being aware of U.S. values and interests, however, Canadians have not substantially reduced exports because what becomes of value to them necessarily is a function of domestic need in combination with a clear understanding of the interests and values of the U.S. Against Scott, then, a reasonable claim can be made that values are not determined in an internatio..al vacuum.

---

[14] ibid.

Another difficulty present in Scott's analysis is that his concept of the national interest is defined such that anything that is a value to a state is an interest and anything that is an interest is a value. As he never defines value, when he defines interest in terms of value the reader is left with an ambiguous definition. For Scott to say, as in proposition four above, that "actors may be said to have conflicting interests when their values conflict" is equivalent to saying that actors have conflicting interests when they have conflicting interests. If the term, value, was given a clear meaning distinct from interest, then Scott would be on firmer ground. However, he does not supply a meaning for value that is independent of interest.

Even if it is assumed that the term value tells us something important about national interests, Scott faces insurmountable difficulties with his third proposition. He states, "[a]ctors may be said to have common interests when they share a set of common values and when the pursuit or achievement of its preferred alternatives by one actor contributes to the pursuit or achievement of the preferred policy alternatives of another."[15] If interests are defined as values, then it is somewhat arbitrary for Scott to define common interests as shared values and as a contribution to the pursuit of policy alternatives of another state. Since policy alternatives is suggestive of the means of achieving values, the author seems to be saying that interests are values, on the one hand, and that interests are the means to the realization of values, on the other.

---

[15] ibid. p. 126.

Territorial integrity, self-preservation and national security are often mentioned as examples of general values important to actors. Scott would maintain that these are interests. Conceptual ambiguity occurs, however, when discussion moves to the adoption of acts and policies to maximize these values. Are policies to be included in the national interest? This is a problem that all definitions which focus on the national interest as general or specific values must address. If interests are defined as values and if values are thought to pertain to the ends of foreign policy conduct, then it is impossible that interests can be thought of as referring to the means at an actor's disposal.

Vernon Van Dyke makes interests and values synonomous but claims that values can be means, depending on the circumstances: In any circumstances where values are of importance, "a dependent interest is championed as a means of promoting an independent interest. In any series of these sorts everything leading up to this end can be thought of as a means."[16] In a particular situation power may be the means to maintain self-preservation. Yet under different conditions self-preservation may be a dependent interest in the service of liberty or ideology. In regard to this point, Van Dyke approvingly quotes Ralph Perry: "Even self-preservation may be made a dependent interest; otherwise there would be no meaning in the question, 'What is it that makes life worth living?'"[17] In equating values with interests and by saying that these

---

[16] Vernon Van Dyke, op. cit., p. 568.

[17] Ibid., p. 569. Also see Ralph Barton Perry, Realms of Value, A Critique of the Theory of a Political Concept (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), p. 51.

interests can be means or ends depending on the circumstances, Van Dyke is committed to the position that values can be means. However, the term values is not normally used to refer to the means at an actor's disposal. To take the example above, an actor may indeed order the value of liberty above that of self-preservation but then liberty is not a means when it is referred to in this way. Rather, it is another value which may conflict with self-preservation. In the attempt to maximize liberty one engages in activity which may endanger self-preservation. But surely it is the activity that endangers one's life and not the value of liberty itself. When interests are viewed in terms of one static value leading to another static value they seem to have no clear application.

Another author, Joseph Frankel, defines "national interests" in terms of the desired outcomes of each state. "Within each separate context," Frankel argues, "the interests of each single state are bound to be individual."[18] National interests are, according to Frankel, the most comprehensive description of the values of each state.[19] In equating interests with the values or desired outcomes of each state, Frankel thinks that interests are general and must be subjectively determined by the decision-makers of each state. He expands his definition to include not only the desired outcomes of each state but also "the sum total of interests and policies actually pursued".[20] To append his definition in this way is to confuse the ingredients of foreign policy making with the

---

[18] Joseph Frankel, op. cit., p. 19.

[19] ibid., p. 26.

[20] ibid., pp. 31-35.

desired outcomes of each state. If national interests are equated with desired outcomes it does not make sense to equate interests with the operational level or, in other words, with the policies adopted to achieve the desired outcomes. Policies and acts are not "desired outcomes" in themselves.

Morton Kaplan identifies interests with values by reference to national needs. He states, "The interest of a nation is to satisfy national needs ... and there are as many national interests as national needs."[21] But he also contends that the national interest "is the good for a national actor".[22] He says, in effect, that 'x' is in A's interest if A needs 'x'. A problem with this definition is that Kaplan does not show why national needs are equivalent to "the good for a national actor". What someone needs is usually thought of as a narrower category than what is for someone's good. The functional needs of an individual cannot be extended far beyond food, shelter and clothing. Similarly, the functional needs of a state cannot be extended much further than preservation. If this is reasonable, it is unlikely that an actor's good would only include the imperative of preservation.

Each of the authors previously discussed defines "national interests" in terms of a criterion that is neither free of ambiguity nor capable of being applied to the discipline with regularity. The term value has no descriptive meaning when it is not specified. It is so ambiguous that Scott enlarges the meaning of the term to include anything that

---

[21] Morton Kaplan, op. cit., p. 151.

[22] Ibid., p. 161.

decision-makers perceive as being important while Kaplan constricts value to the needs of a state.

A second difficulty with the formulation, "'x' is in A's national interests if A values 'x'," is the following: an actor may misperceive his interests. Determined pursuit of certain values in international politics has often turned out to be not in the national interests of the actor. Hitler valued the thousand year Reich; in the last days of the Reich the maniacal pursuit of this value was neither in his 'interests' nor those of Germany.

A related problem with defining the national interest as the subjective values of decision-makers is that decision-makers often rationalize foreign policy decisions in terms of "the national interest" to gain domestic support. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger often employs this term to avoid answering embarrassing questions regarding foreign policy matters. Yet what Henry Kissinger values may not be in the interests of the United States.

Finally, when national interests are defined as general and subjectively determined values, the concept becomes static; it tells us very little about the actual behavior of states. For example, conflicts of interest are usually thought of as having a dynamic quality to them. In the Sino-Soviet territorial disputes the two states are not in conflict over values since they both value acquisition of the same territory. It is the interplay between the dynamic acts and policies of these two states which cause conflicts of interest, not the values which their foreign policies are designed to promote.

B. The National Interest as General and Objectively Determined Values

Robert Osgood understands "national self-interest" to mean "a state of affairs valued solely for ite benefit to the nation."[23] He believes that the meaning of "interest" can be discerned regardless of what decision-makers interpret to be in their s.ates' national interests. Therefore, hi's analysis in Ideals and Self-Interest in America's Foreign Relations is meant to be an objective account of those interests.

His book is largely a reaction against what he claims is the American tendency to overestimate the importance of ideals and to underestimate the drive of nations to pursue self-interested goals.[24] Osgood's analysis is directed toward the problem of reconciling "national self-interest" with ideals transcending the interests of any state.[25] What is interesting in this account is that Osgood sets out his analysis of interests at the international level in terms of the behavioral traits of the individual. The competition for power between states, he says, "will never be abolished or even transformed into orderly procedures ... until men undergo a psychological revolution..."[26] By calling national interests "national self-interest" he attempts to bring psychological analysis to bear on international phenomena. While the possibilities inherent in discussing state behavior in these terms has some promise, until additional work is done, the premises remain unsubstantiated.

---

[23] Robert Osgood, Ideals and Self-Interest in America's Foreign Relations (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 4.

[24] Ibid., p. 10.

[25] Ibid., p. 1.

[26] Ibid., p. 13.

A further difficulty with his analysis is the definition of "national self-interest" as something "valued solely for its benefit to the nation. Once having defined national interests in these terms, it is really impossible for him to talk about a mutuality of self-interest between states. Yet Osgood contends that by patiently building upon a foundation of mutual self-interest the area of international cooperation and confidence could be enlarged.[27] Having defined "national self-interest" in terms of "sole" benefit he cannot then turn around and discuss mutuality of interest and be consistent. Either an interest is mutual or selfish; it can hardly be both. It is not possible to include cooperative interests once the state's interest is cast in terms of sole benefit to itself. What Osgood is attempting to do is to create a framework that encompasses interests running from selfish ones all the way to long range interests or principles such as justice, humanitarianism, and self-sacrifice.[28] Osgood turns the pursuit of interests or national benefits into an all-embracing concept: one that tries to explain too much.

Unlike Osgood, Reinhold Niebuhr distinguishes between self-interest and "the national interest". He states, "...a consistent self-interest on the part of the nation will work against its interests because it will fail to do justice to the broader and longer interests."[29] Furthermore, "it would be fatal for the security of the nation if some loyalties beyond its interests were not operative in its moral life to prevent the

---

[27] ibid., p. 23.

[28] ibid., p. 442.

[29] Reinhold Niebuhr, Christian Realism and Political Problems (N.Y.: Charles Scribners Sons, 1953), pp. 136-137.

national interest from being conceived in too narrow and self-defeating terms."[30] For Niebuhr, self-interest is a narrower concept than "the national interest". The latter term is broader in the sense that it may be beneficial for a state to deny present advantages for greater gains in the future. This is not a moral precept, but a dictum of prudence. If a state is to maximize its national security and gain advantages in the international system, it must adhere to maxims of this sort. Prudence provides a check on the pursuit of advantage only as long as a state perceives that it has something to be cautious about.

Niebuhr, aware of the difficulty of limiting the concept of "the national interest" to a combination of self-interest and prudence, enlarges the sphere of the national interest to include a sense of justice:

> It is necessary ... to draw upon another moral and spiritual resource to widen the conception ot interest ... The sense of justice must prevent prudence from becoming too prudential in defining interest.[31]

When the meaning of interest is broadened in this way it loses its significance as an explanatory concept in international relations. If "the national interest" is invested with moral content, then by what criterion

---

[30] Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Moral Issue in International Relations", (an unpublished paper prepared for the Rockefeller Foundation), cited in Robert Good, "The National Interest and Political Realism: Niebuhr's Debate With Morgenthau and Kennan", Journal of Politics, XXII (June, 1960), p. 605. Also see Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society (N.Y.: Charles Scibners Sons, 1932), pp. 232-233. Niebuhr thinks that an understanding of the interests of others necessarily provides a check on the pursuit of advantage. The author lauds the counsels of the moralists who believe in an adjustment of interest to interest: "He believes (the moralist) that such an adjustment is possible only through a rational check upon self-interest and a rational comprehension of the interests of others."

[31] Reinhold Niebuhr, "Our Moral and Spiritual Resources For International Cooperation", Social Action (Feb. 1956), pp. 18-19.

can the pursuit of interest, from a moral point of view, be judged? It may be surmised that Niebuhr finds it imperative to include values not previously thought to be included in the meaning of "the national interest" for fear that the narrower perspective of self-interest and prudence can lead to all sorts of negative consequences.

Niebuhr's analysis, like Osgood's, derives from an explicit conception of human nature. He endows it with dual, fixed impulses, one directed toward self-preference and the other toward a sense of justice.[32] The term "the national interest" expresses this duality in the relations between states. This extension is not helpful in discerning the nature of national interests because it is dependent upon a highly subjective view of human nature which weakens the usefulness of the concept for any kind of analysis of state behavior. In short, though Niebuhr satisfies the criterion of objectivity in that his analysis is meant to apply to all states, his premises about the nature of man are not substantiated. Furthermore, by resorting to the broader conception of the national interest, which includes a sense of justice, his concept does not supply its readers with the capability of determining conflicts of interest. It is not made clear whether a dispute between two states is a result of man's persistent human nature or whether such disputes are conflicts over policies, ends, or the mistaken perceptions of decision-makers.

Arnold Wolfers approaches international relations, in general, and national interests, in particular, with an analytic method which is

---

[32] Robert Good, op. cit., p. 618. "Man--individual man and collective man, moral man and political man--acknowledges the worth and integrity of the neighbor, but manages persistently to prefer himself to the neighbor, while insisting that his self-interest serves best the interest of the neighbor as well."

attuned to the need for conciseness and clarity. He compares national interests with, oddly enough, good roofs:

> To say that something is in the interest of the state is like saying that a good roof is in the interest of the house, when what one really means is that a good roof is considered vital by the houses's inhabitants who value the safety, completeness, and reputation of their residence.[33]

When someone says 'x' is in A's national interests, Wolfers suggests, he is saying something about 'x's' usefulness in establishing or maintaining central values. The 'x' is defined as a means. Immediately following this analogy Wolfers contends that there is "nothing absolute or unchanging about the value men attach to state interests."[34] Decision-makers in different states will pursue different interests depending on ideology, territorial location and historical inputs. In his essay, "National Security as an Ambiguous Symbol," Wolfers sets out a similar idea where the national interest suggests a direction of policy: it indicates that the policy is designed to promote demands that are ascribed to the nation."[35] The key to Wolfers' dilemma of trying to specify the "objective" national interest of all states is his recognition of the diversity of aims and demands of states. He realizes that the value a family attaches to its particular roof is dependent upon the kind of house that is built. As the goals of states change, the national interests also change. In his view the two are inextricably interrelated.

In a second formulation Wolfers orders national interests into two

---

[33] Arnold Wolfers, Discord and Collaboration--Essays on International Politics (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1962), p. 6.

[34] ibid.

[35] ibid., p. 147.

discrete categories: possession goals and milieu goals.[36] Possession goals are those directed toward safeguarding and extending national possessions while milieu goals aim at shaping and transforming the environment for common benefits.

There is a discrepancy between Wolfers' formulation that suggests a "direction of policy" and the one that centers on possession and milieu goals. As in the case of Niebuhr, Wolfers confounds two distinct concepts of national interests.

A further difficulty with his analysis is the relativity inherent in his idea of national interests. In his view, they are time-bound and circumstance-bound and thus national interests cannot be specified in a general way. Wolfers confuses the idea of national interests with the specific interests involved in a particular situation. Though policy 'x' may be in state A's interests at one moment and be against its interests in the next, the term national interests may still have a clear meaning which applies to the behavior of all states, regardless of circumstances or time.

A final difficulty with Wolfers' thought is that, like Osgood and Niebuhr, he enlarges the concept of national interests to include the claims of other states. He asserts, "... a wise interpretation and responsible pursuit of the national interest will be found to conform with the principles of morality, reasonably applied, and to the broader interests of mankind."[37] The problem remains of trying to identify

---

[36] Ibid., pp. 73-74.

[37] Ibid., p. 251.

interests separately from values. Instead of drawing the lines between the pursuit of interests and the pursuit of justice, Wolfers places the latter dispositions within a framework that defies their expression. To be concerned with shaping the international environment for mutual gains (milieu goals) is simply not a consideration which can be expressed in terms of national interests without causing undue confusion and ambiguity. John Herz makes the same mistake when he conceives of two sets of interests, a self-centered one and an international interest in "sheer survival".[38] The common denominator of interest, the latter argues, is the "conditional viability" of all states due to nuclear proliferation. Contrary to this view, if on occasion even the "interest" in survival can be dependent upon some other value such as liberty, then no common denominator of interest can give states "opportunities to conceive of their interests as responsibilities to all".[39]

The disparate values which states attempt to maximize in their international behavior cannot be expressed in terms of national interests.[40]

---

[38] See John Herz, International Politics in the Atomic Age (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 312. "What used to be a dichotomy of interests and ideals thus emerges as a dichotomy of two sets of interests. And the struggle between the two is liable to proceed right into the minds and attitudes of the average person ... And because there is now a conflict between two sets of interests, the traditional, nation-centered interest and the new international, or rather universalist interest (in survival), the latter may have a better chance of prevailing than it had when hard-boiled interest clashed with lofty, but 'unrealistic' ideal."

[39] Ibid., p. 161.

[40] William T. R. Fox agrees: "The accumulating evidence that man typically strives to maximize a multiplicity of values serves to warn those who may create theoretical models based on some simplistic assumption that men or groups of men subordinate their every action to the maximization of some one value-- material gain, power, self-respect, etc." William T. R. Fox, "The Uses of International Relations Theory", Theoretical Aspects of International Relations, William T. R. Fox, edited (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959), p. 43.

This concept, if it is to yield descriptive pay-offs, must be expressed in a limited, yet uniform, manner. This cannot be accomplished when it is used to describe the values as well as the policies of states and when it is bifurcated into self-interests and other-directed interests. Wolfers attempts to incorporate goals into his idea of national interests which do not properly belong there. To return to his analogy of the roof, the roof is necessary to the house because it provides benefits to the house's inhabitants which would otherwise be lacking. Most notably, it does not provide benefits to those living in other houses. Had Wolfers traced the implications of his analogy, it is suggested, he would have realized that national interests do not directly benefit others.

Wolfers is placed in this category of writers because he asserts that national interests can be determined apart from the decision-makers of states. He says:

> Statesmen may sincerely believe that vital national interests dictate a particular course of action; but judged by non-nationalistic standards of ethics they may be placing undue value on certain interests of their people or underestimating the value of things not pertaining to their nation which their policy would sacrifice.[41]

He is saying that the theorist's job is to abstract state interests from the predispositions of decision-makers. This is an objective approach to the study of international behavior because it does not depend on any view of human nature, as in Osgood and Niebuhr. Wolfers is aware of an inner compulsion of all states to attempt to increase opportunities for acquisition of values, using national power as the chief means. He is

---

[41] Arnold Wolfers, op. cit., p. 61.

aware, too, that the environment in which states are required to act places limits on the implementation of policies and the pursuit of national interests regardless of whether decision-makers are aware of those limitations.[42]

Authors in this section have a unique advantage over those in the first section: national interests are taken from the hands of decision-makers and placed in those of the theorist whose job it is to differentiate between the perceptions of decision-makers and the objective environment.[43] The major failings of the writers in this category are two: their compulsion to unite, in one concept, the self-interested demands of states and ideals transcending self-interest; and their inability to affix an independent, descriptive definition to national interests which is specific yet covers a significant portion of state behavior.

C. The National Interest as Specific and Objectively Determined Values

Hans Morgenthau and George K nnan affirm an almost polemical allegiance to "the national interest". Morgenthau asserts:

---

[42] Wolfers' thought runs parallel to Harold and Margaret Sprout in this respect: "Capability analysis ... is directed to the calculation of the opportunities and limitations implicit in the milieu, which will affect the operational results of whatever is attempted, irrespective of whether such factors are known and heeded by the decision-makers in question." Harold and Margaret Sprout, "Environmental Factors, in the Study of International Politics", in James Rosenau, edited, International Politics and Foreign Policy (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1969), p. 53.

[43] There is no absolutely "objective" scientific analysis of any social phenomenon. However, it is still appropriate to say that some analyses of "reality" tell us more than others. See Max Weber, The Methodology of the Social Sciences (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1949). For a lucid response to Weber's contention that the social sciences cannot be value-free see Ernest Nagel, The Structure of Science (N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc. 1961).

> "And above all remember always that it is not only a political necessity, but also a moral duty, for a nation to follow in its dealings with other nations one guiding star, one standard for thought, one rule for action: The National Interest."[44]

Both writers think that "the national interest" of a state can be defined specifically and that its content can be determined apart from decision-makers.

In general terms, Morgenthau says that "the national interest" refers to a foreign policy that maximizes benefits to the nation.[45] Similarly, Kennan identifies "the national interest" by reference to benefits or advantages. He states that foreign policy must be oriented to "shaping new and advantageous relations".[46] The key to "the national interest", in Kennan and Morgenthau, is to be found in the means of foreign policy conduct, not the ultimate goals. The means of state behavior which yield national advantages are in "the national interest". More specifically, Morgenthau contends that "statesmen think and act in terms of interest defined as power".[47] Power is the specific criterion, in Morgenthau, by which "the national interest" can be determined. Thus, "the national interest" of all states is synonomous: It centers on an objective law of international politics, the continual pursuit of power. "Whatever the ultimate aims of international politics," Morgenthau declares, "power is always the immediate aim."[48] Power is the kind of good

---

[44] Hans Morgenthau, In Defense of the National Interest (N.Y.: Alfred Knopf, 1951), p. 242.

[45] Hans Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, op. cit., p. 7.

[46] George Kennan, Realities of American Foreign Policy (N.Y.: W. W. Norton and Company, 1966), p. 100.

[47] Hans Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, op. cit., p. 5.

[48] ibid., p. 25.

that can be used to achieve a state's values or ends.

A problem with the criterion of power is that it is derived from an unsubstantiated account of human nature. Morgenthau connects human nature to power in the following terms: "... [m]an's aspiration for power is not an accident of history ... it is an all permeating fact which is the very essence of human existence."[49] Similarly, Kennan sees the exercise of foreign policy "as a result of man's irrational nature, his selfishness, his obstinacy, his tendency to violence."[50] Since this view of human nature is not argued for, the pursuit of power between states could be the result of misunderstanding or injustices rather than "human nature".

A second difficulty with the definition of "the national interest" as power is that neither Kennan nor Morgenthau maintains this view consistently. Morgenthau, for example, sometimes defines "the national interest" in terms of power. He means that "the national interest" must be defined in terms of the power available for the pursuit of goals. Here, "the national interest" represents a guide to conduct where the decision-makers of states coordinate goals and power. Thus, power is not being maximized as in the earlier definition. Rather, in this definition "the national interest" becomes a kind of yardstick by which some of the more important values of states can be realized. In yet another definition Morgenthau contends that it is a requirement of political morality that "... [t]he national interest of a nation which is conscious not only

---

[49]Hans Morgenthau, Politics in the Twentieth Century, abridged edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971) p. 4.

[50]George Kennan, op. cit., p. 48.

of its own interest, but also that of other nations must be defined in terms compatible with others".[51] In this definition Morgenthau includes principled conduct within the framework of "the national interest". In doing this Morgenthau has injected moral content into what had been before an egoistic definition of the term: the pursuit of power. Kennan, too, enlarges the sphere of "the national interest" by saying that universal values become valid as "the gentle civilizer of national self-interest in which they find their true value".[52] Kennan is aware of the unlimited nature of principles.[53] But he insists, paradoxically, that these principles can be incorporated within "the national interest". The reader is confused when "the national interest" is defined by the same authors in different ways.

A final criticism to be levelled at Morgenthau is the following: If "statesmen think and act in terms of interest defined as power", then how is it possible for decision-makers to work against "the national interest"? If power is always the immediate aim of international politics, as Morgenthau says, then power becomes an objective, deterministic force which cannot be controverted. However, the object of the writings of both Kennan and Morgenthau is to show that "the national interest" has not been pursued in American foreign policy and that decision-makers have failed to grasp its meaning. It is untenable to define objective forces in international politics, such as human nature and power, and then criticize foreign policies that controvert those very forces.

---

[51] Hans Morgenthau, "Another Great Debate", American Political Science Review, (Dec., 1952), p. 977.

[52] George Kennan, American Diplomacy, 1900-1950 (N.Y.: Mentor Books, 1957), p. 54.

[53] Ibid., p. 101.

Morgenthau states, "To improve the world one must work with those forces (forces inherent in human nature), not against them."[54] It is at least reasonable to inquire how one can work for or against determined forces over which decision-makers seem to have no control.

Both Kennan and Morgenthau define "the national interest" in terms of what tends to contribute to national benefits or advantages. The virture of this definition is that it is meant to apply to all states; it focuses on the means for obtaining those things a state wants; and it is not dependent, for its determination, on the perceptions of decision-makers. Had they settled on a definition that was only a partial explanation of state behavior, rather than expressing "the national interest" as a monolithic whole, their accounts would have been more satisfactory.

In regard to the writings on the concept of interest Brian Barry aptly comments:

> ... [i]t is a familiar idea that people who are perfectly well able to use a concept may nevertheless talk rubbish about it, so even if many of the writings about the concept are confused it does not follow that the concept itself is.[55]

Although it is possible to be highly critical of the literature on the concept of interest in international relations, it does not follow that national interests are useless in explaining significant aspects of interstate activity. Those that have written on the concept of interest in international relations have assumed that the term can be defined in terms of value. When the term is defined and used in this way it is indeed vacuous.

---

[54] Hans Morgenthau, op. cit., p. 5.

[55] Brian Barry, "The Public Interest", quoted in Anthony Quinton, edited, Political Philosophy (London:Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 112.

CHAPTER 3

The Concept of Interest in Recent Philosophical Literature

When interest in international relations is defined in terms of value it seems to have no clear application. Attention is now focused on those definitions of interest not already covered in the international literature. The first part of this chapter will be devoted to a discussion of alternative definitions of interest in the philosophical literature. In the second part, special attention is given to Brian Barry's formulation of interest. A modified version of his idea of interest is the basis of the definition of what is in an actor's national interests as set out in chapter four.

A. The Idea of Interest:

John Plamenatz,
S. I. Benn
Virginia Held

"X is in A's interests" means, for Plamenatz, that the x is a "settled and avowed" aspiration of "A" which either "A" or other people concerned about the aspiration believe to be realizable.[1] Two requirements, then, are presented as evidence for the existence of an interest. First, the interest must be settled upon or deeply felt, and second, it must be believed to be realizable.

This idea of interest is subjective because it makes the existence of an interest dependent upon the dispositions of an actor; for Plamenatz,

---

[1] John Plamenatz, "Interests", Political Studies, Vol. 2 (1954), pp. 1-2.

an interest simply does not exist if it is not aspired to. This definition is subject to the limitations endemic to a subjectivist interpretation: it becomes impossible to determine an interest independent of the actor and it does not allow the possibility of asking the kinds of questions that are normally asked about interests. That is, although a particular actor may aspire to something, it still seems reasonable to ask whether or not it is in his interests to pursue it. The actor may be mistaken about what is in its interests. For example, while the South African government insists that apartheid policies are in the interests of South Africa, it can be said that arguing from common sense and fact such policies are not in its interests. The government has misperceived or purposefully misinterpreted the objective situation.

Another difficulty with Plamenatz's view is that he adds a third requirement to his definition of interest: entitlement.[2] The main conditions for the presence of an interest, then, are that the thing in question must be aspired to, must be believed to be realizable, and the actor must believe that he is entitled to the object. A demand or persistent claim becomes an interest because it is mediated through the actor's values and his sense of entitlement. Entitlement, as Plamenatz is aware, is a community concept. That is, what one is entitled to usually involves the opinions of others. Thus, Plamenatz is led to a strange conclusion concerning interests. Claims and demands become molded into interests by applying commonly held standards of justice to them.[3] The futility of

---

[2]John Plamenatz, Man and Society, Vol. 2 (London: Longman Group Limited, 1963), p. 315.

[3]"Interests", op. cit., p. 4, p. 7.

attaching entitlement to the meaning of interest is vividly expressed in one of Plamenatz's own examples. He says, "If we know a boy's temperament and abilities ... we can reasonably say that it is his true interest (though he may not know it) to choose one occupation rather than another ..."[4] It hardly makes sense to ascribe entitlement to the choice of an occupation. What the boy is entitled to involves commonly held standards whereas what is in his interest, in view of his abilities and talents, seems to be divorced from such standards.

According to Plamenatz, an actor would not have an interest unless he could show that the demand or claim is deeply felt; that it is believed to be realizable; and that the actor is somehow entitled to it. The following examples undermine each of Plamenatz's criteria. If it is said that education is in the student's interests, what is meant is that it is in his interests regardless of the student's convictions or demands. By saying that energy self-sufficiency is in the interests of the U.S., what is asserted is that it is in the U.S. interests whether or not it is believed to be realizable. Finally, to say that a rise in stock prices is in the stockbroker's interests is to say that such an outcome is in his interests independent of its justifiability. Plamenatz's idea of interest is unsatisfactory because it does not account for these typical uses of interest.

S. I. Benn's analysis of interest is similar to Plamenatz's because it is also related to normative standards. The difference is that in Benn, an interest is related to a standard independent of the actor.

---

[4] Man and Society, op. cit., p. 317.

Interests are more normative than Plamenatz allows, according to Benn, because they are grounded in morality and related to certain standards.[5] In Benn's view, the interest of an actor is related to a paradigm of what any actor might claim or ask for.[6] He does not describe the content of this standard except to say that an interest is very similar to a natural right. The drawing of this parallel creates difficulty as an interest becomes intermingled with opaque normative standards.[7] Benn seems to make an implicit assumption that these standards are known to the public and are commonly acknowledged. This is unreasonable. By what publicly acknowledged standard of morality can an interest be determined?

If interests are prima facie claims related to some as yet undetermined standard, then how can two conflicting claims ever be reconciled? Until Benn's objective standard is articulated, each interest, no matter how many reasons are brought forward in its support, remains subjective. Cindy can bring forth a claim that her rent should be lowered while the landlord can equally bring forth reasons why it should be increased. Similarly, French wine growers can bring claims forward against the importation of cheap Italian wine, while Italian wine growers can bring forth claims in favor of increased wine sales to France. There is no shared standard through which these claims can be reconciled, yet all of them may be reasonable.

---

[5] S. I. Benn, "'Interests' in Politics", Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Volume 60 (1960), p. 128.

[6] Ibid., p. 134.

[7] The ambiguous term, interest, is defined in terms of a value word, entitlement. Felix Oppenheim would call this the "definest fallacy". Interest, the term to be defined descriptively, is ascertained by an evaluational term. See Felix Oppenheim, "Egalitarian as a Descriptive Concept", American Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. 7 (April, 1970), p. 148.

Benn shares with Plamenatz the idea that interests are claims. A major difference between the two writers is that Plamenatz argues, subjectively, that interests can only be related to one's own normative standards which may be held in common with others, while Benn imagines the existence of an independent standard whereby interests can be asserted. Also, Benn contends that an interest can exist for an actor even though he is not aware of it, while Plamenatz makes interests dependent upon an actor's subjective feelings.

Both writers maintain that interests are claims for certain specific ends or values. In a more recent account of the meaning of interest Virginia Held generally follows the approach offered in Benn.[8] She asserts that the phrase, "x is in A's interests," is a claim which is affirmed as justifiable; it is more than "A wants x" since it asserts justifiability and this is a normative assertion, a prima facie finding.[9] She suggests that there are good reasons, though not necessarily conclusive ones, for saying that "x is in A's interests". Two criteria are offered: The 'x' must be wanted by or for some actor and the 'x' must be believed to be justifiable. A case of interest exists for Held, contrary to Benn, even if the interest turns out not to be justifiable within or between political systems.

Held cleverly uses the following example to elucidate her meaning:

---

[8] Virginia Held, The Public Interest and Individual Interests, (N.Y.: Basic Books, Inc., 1970), pp. 163-164.

[9] To view interests as prima facie claims or natural rights is not uncommon in the literature. See Julius Stone, Human Law and Human Justice, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968), p. 341; Charles Fried, "Justice and Liberty", in Carl Friedrich (ed.), Nomos, Justice (N.Y.: Atherton Press, 1963), pp. 126-146.

> If a court judges that a given action is a case of theft it does not at the same time have to judge whether the law prohibiting theft is a good law or even a valid law.[10]

Similarly, according to Held, a case of interest cannot be equated or confused with its ultimate justifiability. However, even if Held's distinction is pertinent, the question still remains as to whether an acceptable definition of interest has anything to do with claims asserted as justifiable.

For example, when President Ford says that resource strangulation is a criterion for U.S. military action in the Arab States, he is not, in any way, committed to an assertion involving justifiability. He is claiming, rather, that it may be in the U.S. national interests to intervene in spite of considerations of justifiability, not because of them.

Held, like Plamenatz and Benn, defines the term, interest, in a normative context. Instead of being suspicious of the connection between interests and what one is entitled to or claims, each is apparently committed to interpretations placed on interest by leaders and other persons seeking to rationalize the pursuit of interest. These "justifications" must not be confused with the content of interest.

B. The Idea of Interest:

Brian Barry

Brian Barry does not appeal to claims, entitlement, justifiability or any other locution that is dependent upon subjective standards in his

---

[10] Held, op. cit., p. 32.

analysis of interests. He provocatively states, "... [t]he expression "in so and so's interests" is neither equivocal nor vague."[11] He quickly disposes of two interpretations: namely, the equating of interests with wants or with justifiable claims. He says if "x is in A's interests" is equivalent to "A wants x", then the question "A wants x but is it in his interests," cannot be asked. He continues, saying that by equating "x is in A's interests" with "x would be a justifiable claim on the part of A" the question cannot be asked, "X is in A's interests, but is it a justifiable claim?" Barry thinks that these are reasonable questions which should be asked.

It was commonly asked, for example, whether it was in the U.S. national interests to join the League of Nations, yet no one viewed the Senate (those responsible for ratifying U.S. membership) as wanting to join. Conversely, it makes sense to say that Pakistan wanted to maintain what is now called Bangladesh as an integral part of Pakistan. It still seems possible to ask whether it was in Pakistan's interests to attempt to do so. In common usage a distinction is usually made between interests and wants.

Having previewed the formulations of others, Barry proceeds by saying, as a first approximation, that an action or policy is in an actor's interests if it increases his opportunities to get what he wants.[12] As an

---

[11] Brian Barry, Political Argument (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), p. 175.

[12] ibid., p. 176. It should be noted that Barry sympathizes with Talcott Parsons' identity of interest with generalized means to any ultimate ends. A major difference between the two writers is that Barry claims that interests do not always contribute to the satisfaction of certain kinds of ends. See Talcott Parsons, The Structure of Social Action (N.Y.: Free Press of Glencoe, 1949), p. 262.

example, he says that since wealth and power may be thought of as assets which contribute to getting what one wants, these are universal interests; these assets increase an actor's potential to get what he wants. Barry introduces a qualification to this definition: increased opportunities (interests) cannot be used to get whatever an actor wants. If an actor wants his own assets decreased or wants other actors to have their share of opportunities, then he is allowing principles to override interests.[13] Thus, given Barry's definition, the Canadian government's want to send aid to Ethiopian starvation victims must be understood as not being in Canada's national interests, other things equal. This qualification is unnecessary because wants are never in an actor's interests. According to Barry, only acts and policies which increase an actor's opportunities for want-satisfaction are in his interests. A policy of sending aid to Ethiopia could never be in Canada's national interests because it decreases Canadian opportunities. But the want for sending such aid is neither in nor opposed to Canadian interests. Common sense suggests that power and wealth are the type of asset that can be used to satisfy most of an actor's own wants and many of other actors wants.

One might well ask: If interests are generalized means which can only satisfy certain kinds of want (e.g. self-regarding wants), then must all other-regarding wants always introduce a principle overriding interests? Barry implies that this is the case. However, common sense does not warrant this conclusion. A policy of decreasing one asset (wealth) in order to increase another (status) may be in an actor's interests. For

---

[13]Brian Barry, op. cit., p. 177.

example, Saudi Arabia grants financial gifts of aid to several Middle Eastern States. These gifts may be construed as means to other-regarding wants of the Saudi Arabian government, including the improvement in the economies of other states in the region. Such policies reduce the net wealth of Saudi Arabia, but may increase her status. Increased status is in Saudi Arabia's interests because it increases her opportunities for want-satisfaction. Thus, one interest may be reduced in order to increase another without introducing principles which override interests.

Barry argues that there is a close connection between an actor's interests and evaluating acts and policies. Thus, to determine the existence of an interest one must compare the results of alternative acts and/or policies:

> When you say that x is in A's interests, you are talking <u>about</u> an action or policy but what you are saying about it is something about its results ... what you are saying is that the results are wanted by A.[14]

In Barry's work "interest" is always limited by the following conditions: It always refers to acts and policies, the <u>results</u> of which increase an actor's opportunities to get what he wants. Furthermore, the results must be wanted by the actor and results concerning actors other than "A" are not to be considered as relevant. Finally, Barry says that situations can never be in an actor's interests.[15]

This is the first concept of interest discussed which consistently places the term in the realm of means rather than ends, values or

---

[14] <u>ibid.</u>, p. 181.

[15] <u>ibid.</u>, p. 184.

objectives. In Barry's work, these means cannot contribute to the satisfaction of all wants, as previously noted. More specifically, according to Barry, interests do not help to realize wants involving principles. This is not to say that one should not pursue courses of action that go against interest, or that one should always pursue a course that is in one's interests. Barry allows that "one can recognize something as being in one's interest without pursuing it."[16] To take an example, it may be in the Chinese interest to trade goods with the Western world on a much larger scale, but a deep-seated commitment to self-sufficiency may help to prevent the adoption of such policies. Similarly, it may be in the U.S. interests to sell nuclear reactors to third world countries but the principle of non-proliferation may override nuclear "deals".

Interests become comparative, using Barry's formulation, because they are limited to the means at an actor's disposal. Generalized means, such as wealth and power, though not exactly quantifiable, are at least comparable; they are a universal currency which is descriptive in nature. Indeed, Barry views interest as a descriptive concept. This helps in objectifying a particular act or policy by looking at the results and noting whether or not an agent possesses more means than before for the satisfaction of self-regarding wants. Acts and policies which increase a state's power capability would be in that state's interests, but once the increased power is obtained, its usage is neither in a state's interests nor opposed to its interests. Thus, something comes to be in an

---

[16] Brian Barry, "The Public Interest", in Anthony Quinton (ed.), Political Philosophy (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 114.

agent's interests not by immediately satisfying wants, but by its resulting "in one's possessing means to satisfying wants".[17]

While accepting the basis and general thrust of Barry's concept, there are several problems which should be explored. First, at what point in time can an increase or decrease in opportunities for want-satisfaction be measured? Second, by eliminating situations or circumstances from his definition, Barry closes off cases that are normally, thought to be in, or opposed to, an agent's interests. Third, does his rendition of interest incorporate conflicts of interest between actors? Fourth, his interpretation of interest is still partially subjective. That is, Barry says that the results of policies must be wanted by the agent, thereby leaving the student with a partly subjective formulation.

Barry does not account for the time at which an increase or decrease in opportunities can be assessed.[18] If policy 'x' is adopted at T_1 and at T_2 opportunities have not been increased, but at T_3 they have, at what point can a concrete appraisal be made? It would be easy to imagine a case like this arising. At T_1 Peru inaugurates a policy of expropriation of American firms. At T_2, the results of Peru's policy substantially decrease the assets of the state and, consequently, its opportunities for satisfying wants. But at T_3 assets are increased over and beyond what they were at T_1. Thus, at T_2 the policy is not in Peru's

---

[17] Political Argument, op. cit., p. 184. A foreign policy act of the Venezualan government, let us say an increase of 50% in the cost of a barrel of oil, would likely increase its wealth and, therefore, be in its interests, everything else remaining the same, if the results of the act put Venezuala in a better position to satisfy its wants. The use of those increased assets is neither in nor opposed to Venezuala's interests.

[18] This line of criticism was elucidated by Tom Pocklington, University of Alberta, in connection with the Felix Oppenheim article cited earlier.

interests but at T_3 it is. The time factor is an important problem of any definition of interest that focuses on, and is dependent upon, the consequences of acts and policies. This problem will be addressed, but only partly resolved, in the following chapter.

A second criticism is that Barry does not allow situations to be in an actor's interests even though situations or circumstances are sometimes referred to as being in so-and-so's interests. For example, Barry says that increased assets are always in an actor's interests.[19] John reaches into his coat pocket and finds, much to his surprise, two twenty-dollar bills. Neither he nor his friends know how the money got there. John has increased his assets as a resu't of a fortuitous circumstance. Thus, the circumstance is in John's interests. Barry could respond to this example by saying that John's wealth has been increased as a result of someone's act. But it seems more reasonable, in this case, to say that the interest is a direct result of circumstances. Some inheritances may be viewed in the same way. Leonard, an American, inherits two-thousand pounds from a remote relative in England. This windfall may appropriately be regarded as a circumstance even though it bears some relation to the persons involved in writing and executing the will. However, it is clear why Barry eliminates situations from his concept of interest. Simply put, his definition is action-oriented; it is dependent upon the adoption of concrete acts and policies coupled with the consequent results. Barry does not allow natural phenomena (land, rain, resources, etc.) to be in an actor's interests even though they can create opportunities for want-satisfaction. He takes this position because he

---

[19] Brian Barry, op. cit., p. 178.

considers interests to be dynamic and circumstances or situations to be static. Given this definition, the Alps were not in the interests of the Viet Cong; and the English Channel was not in the interests of England. Contrary to Barry, situations can be in an actor's interests when they create exploitable opportunities for want-satisfaction, a point discussed in more detail in the next chapter. The mere possession of the Golan Heights creates opportunities for its possessor, independent of any acts and policies adopted to exploit this opportunity. Thus, situations must be accounted for in the concept of interest because they often create opportunities for individuals or states to obtain the objects they want.[20]

A third problem with Barry's definition is that it does not extend to conflicts of interest between two or more actors. A conflict of interest, for Barry, is a conflict of opportunities for <u>one</u> actor. He limits the concept to opportunities for want-satisfaction now or some time in the future. But is this the only kind of conflict of interest? A situation can be envisioned where two actors draft two policies, each of which would tend to increase their opportunities to get what they want, but where both are not satisfiable. For example, Iceland formulates a policy of extending its fishing limit to 200 miles. This increases Iceland's opportunities to get what she wants (e.g. more fish for Icelandic fishermen). England, at the same time, initiates a policy of allowing her fishermen to fish anywhere outside 25 miles of the Icelandic coast. The results of this policy increase England's food supply, thereby being in

---

[20] Machiavelli thought that it "may be true that fortune is the ruler of half our actions, but that she allows the other half or thereabouts to be governed by us". <u>The Prince and Discourses</u> (N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), p. 91. The knowledgeable Prince will seize opportunities created in or by nature and make preparations in advance of adverse changes.

her interests. There is a conflict of interest between these states, not over wants, since they want the same fish, but over opportunities for want-satisfaction. Barry's definition must be extended in this way to include conflicts of interest between two or more actors.

A final criticism of Barry's defini ion is that it is still partially subjective. He maintains that the results of a policy must be wanted by the actor for it to be in his interests. Thus, "x is in A's interests" if, and only if: 1. 'x' is an act or policy; 2. the results of 'x' increase A's opportunities for want-satisfaction; and 3. the results of 'x' are wanted by A. Barry maintains a self-directed concept of interest by making the existence of an interest dependent upon an agent's actual wants. But are interests always dependent upon the actual, expressed wants of actors? For example, suppose that a team of researchers finds that if Russia were to pay off its Lend Lease debt to the U.S. the results of such a policy would ease East-West tension and contribute to a most-favored-nations status with the U.S. The Soviet Union may not consciously want the results of this policy. Even though the Soviet Union may not actually want the results of certain policies, those policies can still be in its interests because they would increase its opportunities. Though an increase in opportunities is usually wanted by the agent, the agent need not necessarily know about any specified want. Thus, it is advisable to say that the Soviet Union would want the results of policies if they increased its opportunities for satisfaction of goals.

Barry's definition is concise and it allows independent researchers to discover interests apart from what an agent says is in his interests. Furthermore, by focusing on the alternative means at an agent's disposal, Barry's concept allows one to compare the results of acts and policies to

determine those that increase or decrease opportunities. The problem with Barry's analysis of interests is that it is too narrow to be applied with regularity to the international environment. An adequate definition of what is in a state's national interests must account for the undefined and vaguely defined wants of states; it must include circumstances and situations which have played a central part in inter-state interactions; and it must account for conflicts of interest between actors. If Barry's significant contribution to the literature on interests is properly appended and broadened, a satisfactory definition of what is in an actor's national interests should result.

CHAPTER 4

National Interests in International Relations

Introduction

There is no such thing as "the national interest". In no way can the many disparate means and ends of foreign policy behavior be organized into a coherent whole by the simple use of this or any other expression. For this reason, the expression, "x is in A's national interests," will be limited in this chapter to identifying the existence of, and explaining the meaning of, that which is in a state's interests.

As an initial definition, it may be said that "x is in A's national interests" if 'x' is an act, a policy or a circumstance, the results of which increase A's opportunities to gain over its previous position in the international system. Aspects of what is in an actor's national interests emerge from this formulation, some of which have appeared in the literature and others which will be discussed for the first time.

Of those aspects which have been discussed previously in the literature, the idea of interest is affirmed to be self-directed. That is, the results of 'x' must produce opportunities for A to gain over its previous position. This characteristic of interests is described in the works of Hans Morgenthau and Brian Barry. Another element of interests discussed by other scholars and adopted in this chapter is the idea that they are objective and are, therefore, independent of a decision-maker's preferences and values. If the idea of national interests is to be of empirical use to the student, then it must be defined in such a way as to leave room for a decision-maker to mistake what he thinks is in his state's

interests. By making the concept of interest dependent upon the results of acts, policies and circumstances this necessary condition is fulfilled. Independent observers can find out whether a particular policy is in a state's interests by looking at the results and determining whether an increase in opportunities is evident.[1] A third element in the definition, discussed by Brian Barry, is the emphasis placed on the generalized means of actors, including wealth and power. Thus, to say that 'x' is in A's national interests is to say that 'x' is a means to the satisfaction of a state's wants. The advantage in focusing on the means of foreign policy is that it is easier to measure an increase in a state's opportunities to improve its situation, than it is to measure wants or want-satisfaction. Although it is possible to list wants, a mere listing reveals little about the nature of state activity. Also, it is impossible to measure want-satisfaction independent of the actor involved, while opportunities such as an increase in wealth, power or some other asset are more readily identifiable and measurable.[2]

While any comprehensive discussion of national interests must include all of the above elements to give the concept full meaning, several other factors must also be included. First, national interests, as argued in the last chapter, can apply to situations or circumstances, not only to acts and policies. Second, something can be in a state's interests even though the decision-makers of the state have done nothing to increase opportunities. For example, a state other than the recipient of an

---

[1] Scholars may, on occasion, disagree on whether a state's policies have resulted in an increase in opportunities. Some arbitrariness is involved in making judgments in difficult cases.

[2] At this stage in the development of international theory, it is necessary to measure increases in opportunities in terms of "moreness" rather than exact measurements.

increase in opportunities may adopt policies which are in the recipient's interests. Even an opponent may inadvertently do so. Third, the expression, "to gain over its previous position in the international system," is entirely new.[3] What does this phrase mean? It denotes an improvement in a state's situation at T_2 compared with a previous position, T_1. More explicitly, it suggests 'moreness' in relation to the satisfiable objects of state behavior. To gain over its previous position in the international system a state need not necessarily gain at another actor's expense. This is an important aspect of what is in a state's national interests: A policy that increases a state's opportunities to improve its position does not imply a zero-sum international system where there are losers wherever there are gainers. This will be clarified later in the chapter.

These new elements, when added to the work of others, results in the following definition: X is in A's national interests if 'x' is an act, policy or circumstance, the results of which increase A's opportunities or maintain A's opportunities to gain over its previous position in the international system. This definition is more inclusive than the previous one because it accounts for the maintenance of opportunities which can be in a state's interests. Using this definition, something can

---

[3] In the early 1950's, Percy Corbett suggested the criterion, advantage, as a way of defining "the national interest": "People say 'national interest' to express their idea of the balance of advantage for the nation in any matter which happens to be under discussion." Corbett has definitely captured the self-directed nature of national interests. But note, however, that he does not relate advantage to the results of acts, policies or circumstances nor to the state's position in the international system. He seems, rather, to equate interests with advantages gained. See Percy Corbett, "National Interest, International Organization and American Foreign Policy", World Politics, no. 1 (Oct., 1952), p. 47.

be in a state's interests even though the results of particular acts and policies only maintain previously gained opportunities. For example, while the initial definition explains what would have been in Soviet national interests during the Cuban Missile Crisis, it does not account for U.S. interests. In terms of the definition no gain in U.S. opportunities could be identified because no such gain for the U.S. can be ascertained as a result of the crisis. As for the Soviet Union, placing offensive missiles in Cuba increased her opportunities to gain over her previous position. This strategic policy gave the Soviet Union a foothold in the Western Hemisphere and, thus, opened opportunities for further influence in the area. It is evident that the Soviet Union attempted to gain a better position in the international system at the expense of the U.S. Though it is difficult to conjecture about Soviet intentions (i.e. whether Soviet leaders were testing President Kennedy's strength; whether the Soviets merely wanted the removal of U.S. missiles in Turkey and Greece; or whether the policy was really designed to gain influence in the area), the consequences of this policy, if allowed, would have created opportunities for gain. Intuitively, it makes sense to say that the removal of the missiles was in the U.S. interests. However, the first definition is not broad enough to account for U.S. decision-making in the crisis. The U.S. could not hope to gain opportunities from its acts and policies beyond those already obtained in its previous position. In the revised definition of national interests the results of acts and policies which maintain a previous position are in a state's national interests. Since U.S. policies did, in fact, contribute to the maintenance of opportunities gained in the past those policies were in the U.S. interests. By broadening the concept of national interests in this way the scholar of

International relations can comprehend and explain central aspects of interstate activity which otherwise would be more difficult to understand.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into the following categories: A. Points of Congruence with Brian Barry; B. Broadening the Scope of Interest in International Relations; C. Problems of Application; D. The Pursuit of National Interests.

A. Points of Congruence with Brian Barry

Brian Barry's definition of interests share two characteristics with the definition of national interests presented here. First, both portray interests as generalized means to the satisfaction of wants or realization of objectives and, second, both definitions are dependent upon results which must show an increase in an actor's opportunities.[4]

One attribute of defining the concept of interests in terms of generalized means is the following: There are a limited number of identifiable means, such as wealth and power, which can be used to obtain what an individual or state wants. Only acts and policies which increase an actor's opportunities (generalized means) are in the actor's interests. When interests are defined as values, wants or ends they are not similarly limited because actors pursue a panoply of objectives. No discernible criterion, such as an increase in opportunities, can be identified when interests are defined in these terms. Furthermore, interests would become no more than the subjective preferences of decision-makers for certain states of affairs which are not susceptible to empirical test.

---

[4] I append Barry to include results which show interest-maintenance.

A second attribute of defining interests as generalized means is that an action-orientation is maintained. In common usage interests are not static preferences for certain ends. Rather, the term interest is used to apply to a dynamic situation. The expression, "x is in A's interests," means, on the one hand, that 'x' is usually the result of activity and, on the other, that the results of 'x' (increased opportunities) can be used in further activity to obtain an actor's objectives. Interests represent the dynamic interface between acts (the means at an actor's disposal) and the ends of foreign policy. The Soviet-German non-aggression pact of 1939 illustrates this aspect of interests. In signing the pact, Stalin gained time (an increase in opportunities) to prepare for war by redirecting German efforts westward. Thus, the act of signing the pact was in the Soviet interests because it created opportunities for the Soviets to avert immediate war and to prepare for the imminent conflict with Germany. The additional time created through the pact allowed the Soviets to engage in further activity to realize the objectives of their foreign policy.

Both Brian Barry's definition of interest and the definition of national interests presented here are dependent upon results which must show an increase in an actor's opportunities. The advantage of defining what is in a state's interests in terms of the results of acts and policies is that the investigator can determine objectively which acts and policies increase an actor's opportunities to satisfy wants or to gain a better position. To repeat, only those acts which increase an actor's opportunities are in its interests. Acts which have the sole effect of helping other actors increase their opportunities are never in its interests although such acts may be right. In other words, such acts may be

principled or humanitarian. Thus, this definition of interests distinguishes between what is in an actor's interests and what promotes principles divorced from interest. By focusing on the results of acts and policies, the investigator can separate activity leading to interest-enhancement from activity leading to the realization of principles.

B. Broadening the Scope of Interest in International Relations

Given the complexities of inter-state activity, the idea of interest in international relations is broader than Brian Barry's development of an individual's interests. It is broader in four ways: first, a circumstance can be in a state's interests; second, the maintenance of previous opportunities is in a state's interests; third, the concept of national interests is broadened to account for conflicts of interest between states; fourth, interests must be broadened to include interests in interaction.

1. National Interests as Circumstances

An increase in a state's opportunities to gain over its previous position is always in its interests. In most cases what is in a state's national interests results from the activity of decision-makers. Interests are usually the direct product of acts and policies. However, in some of those cases a circumstance or situation makes it possible for a state to adopt acts that are in its interests. It is sometimes convenient to refer to circumstances which lead up to the adoption of acts and policies as being in a state's interests. This is a subsidiary aspect to the idea of national interests. For example, a historical circumstance which is in the national interests of The People's Republic of China is the British maintenance of Hong Kong. The current status of Hong Kong has

provided China with greater opportunities to trade with the West without altering its policy commitments. Without this historical circumstance increased opportunities for trade would not have resulted. To be sure, the acts and policies of the Chinese government leading up to increased trade are in the Chinese interests. But without the historical circumstance of Hong Kong it would not be possible for China to adopt such policies. Similarly, the Rock of Gibraltar was in the British national interests even though the circumstance was not 'activated' until British ships and soldiers occupied that area. Thus, if a circumstance is required for acts and policies which are in a state's interests to take effect, then the circumstance is in the state's interests also. Whenever a circumstance increases a state's opportunities to gain a better position in the international system it is in that state's interests. However, it is important to note that a circumstance can be in a state's interests without it actually creating a better position for the state. Though the extraction of oil is in Saudi Arabia's interests because it increases her wealth, the use of that wealth may or may not place Saudi Arabia in a better position in the international system. Increased opportunities are the key to gaining a better position in the international system. Further activity is required to design successful acts and policies for the use of increased opportunities in order for a state to actually realize a better position.

2. Interest Maintenance

The concept of what is in a state's national interests is expanded to include the maintenance of a state's opportunities. In international relations there are many cases where it makes sense to say that "x is in A's national interests" even though a state's generalized means are not

increased. The earlier example of U.S. policy in the Cuban Missile Crisis can only be understood in terms of interest maintenance. If it is in a state's interests to increase its opportunities for gain in the international system, then it follows that it is in that state's interests to maintain previously gained opportunities. Many policies of status quo states are directed toward such maintenance. For example, continued U.S. support of the Monroe Doctrine is a consequence of U.S. attempts to maintain its power, wealth and status in South America. Similarly, the Soviet incursion into Czechoslovakia in 1968 was a result of Soviet attempts to maintain control over previous opportunities for gain.

3. Conflicts of Interest

A successful definition of national interests must be sufficiently broad to account for conflicts of interest between two or more actors. A conflict of interest between two or more actors is a conflict over opportunities for gain in the international system.

Domestic conflicts of interest are conflicts over alternative policies, the results of which would each maintain or increase the opportunities of a polity to improve its position. An explication of conflicts of interest between states is more cumbersome. The following formula may be helpful: A conflict of interest exists between two actors when 'x', an actor policy, is in A's interests and 'y', an act or policy, is in B's interests; when 'x' and 'y' are both implemented at T_1; but where the joint implementation of 'x' and 'y' can not simultaneously maintain or increase the opportunities of both states to gain over their previous positions in the international system. Conflicts of interest are not necessarily fixed sum. Either party can gain at the other's expense or both parties can fail to maintain or increase opportunities.

As a hypothetical example, Venezuela adopts a policy of allowing its export price of oil to fluctuate with inflation trends. Let it be assumed that the results of this policy would increase Venezuelan opportunities. Simultaneously, the U.S. adopts a heavy import tax on any oil producing state which allows its price of oil to fluctuate on the basis of an inflation index. Let it be assumed that this policy would at least maintain U.S. opportunities. But if Venezuela is dependent on U.S. dollars paid for its oil and the U.S. is dependent on the importation of Venezuelan oil, then these policies, if implemented simultaneously, can not increase either states' opportunities to gain over their previous positions.

Conflicts of interest are not conflicts over policies but are conflicts over the possible results of policies; they are conflicts over which actor, if any, can maintain or increase its opportunities. In the previous example the results of Venezuelan and U.S. policies could be disastrous for both states since Venezuela might decide to stop exporting its oil to the U.S.

Conflicts over territory are frequently, but not always, conflicts of interest. Whenever a disputed territory has political, economic or strategic importance, conflicts of interest can arise. Two states cannot gain the opportunities which would accrue to them from a disputed territory when each simultaneously enacts conflicting policies designed to gain the assets to be derived from the territory. There is an important distinction to be made between conflicts of interest and other types of conflict. States can be in conflict over territory, ideology or objectives without being in a conflict of interest. China and the Soviet Union may be in a territorial conflict rather than an interest conflict over disputed border areas. If it could be shown that these border areas provide

little or no political, economic or strategic opportunities, the gain of these areas would not be in either states' interests. Thus, there would be no conflict of interest. Conversely, the conflict between mainland China and the Nationalist Chinese is a conflict of interest over the future of Taiwan. Each state stands to gain or at least, in the case of the latter, to maintain opportunities in the international system. What distinguishes a conflict of interest, then, from other types of conflict is that the former always involves assets which would increase or serve to maintain one of the actor's opportunities for gain. Other types of conflict involvement may provide some form of political sustenance to a domestic system, such as the need to appease a hostile public, but they never contribute to a state's opportunities to better its position in the international system.

4. National Interests in Interaction

The idea of interest in international relations must be broadened to include the impact of the policies of other states on a state's interests. In Brian Barry's analysis of interests, individuals are not to be concerned with one another's interests. Interests, for Barry, must always increase an actor's opportunities for want-satisfaction. It is unclear whether they can be thought of in terms of limiting the impact of another individual's acts and policies on one's own interests. Yet it has been a precept of international relations that decision-makers must take into account the acts, policies and circumstances of other states if they are to act on factual information to maintain or increase their own states' opportunities.

National interests are dynamic in the sense that they usually apply to interaction situations. Seldom in international relations is it possible

to maintain or increase a state's opportunities in isolation from the acts and policies of other states. For example, it would be irrational for Canada to adopt an independent foreign policy designed to increase her opportunities without considering the possible consequences of U.S. retaliatory measures. It is in the U.S. nat onal interests to limit the effects of such a policy through acts that will maintain U.S. opportunities vis-a-vis Canada. The definition of national interests offered in this study assumes the presence of interaction. The concept of interest in international relations includes the idea of limiting the deleterious effects of other states' acts and policies on one's opportunities. Thus, maintaining or gaining opportunities is not to be understood in terms of isolated activity, devoid of calculations projecting the actions and responses of other states. It is in this sense that what is in a state's national interests is the product of an interaction setting.

C. Problems of Application

A first problem of application in regard to the proposed definition of national interests is the following: It can be construed as merely a historical accounting device with no predictive capabilities. The argument might be made that the purpose of international theory is to provide students and policy-makers with models and propositions which can project results and predict events. It might be added that the definition of national interests set forth in this study is too heavily dependent upon the results of acts, policies and circumstances. The results must be assessed before calculations of interest maintenance or interest enhancement can be made.

This argument has superficial validity. To derive the objectivity

wanted from the idea of national interest, it appears that there is a reliance upon a factual description of results. But this argument does not affect the general tenor of the arguments made in this study. It is still possible to predict that a policy will be in a state's interests, though with less certainty. One can say that policy 'x', other things considered, will tend to maintain or increase A's opportunities to gain over its previous position in the international system. The ceteris paribus condition, 'other things considered', makes the assessment of what is in a state's national interests conditional. An ultimate determination of what is in A's interests is dependent upon an accurate account of the facts of the situation. These would have to include the results of a state's policies. To predict these results the investigator would rely on an accurate portrayal of the capabilities of states, the possible responses of one state to another state's acts, and an accurate depiction of the present position of states in the international system. Also, it would be necessary to know the kind of international system in existence. Whether the system is fixed-sum or positive gain makes a great deal of difference in projecting what are in states' national interests since the former system assumes limits to interest-enhancement whereas the latter does not.

Any definition of importance to the discipline of international relations must be bound by the limits of our knowledge. Just the same, any successful definition or theory will test those limits by providing new conceptual frameworks. The proposed definition of national interests moves in this direction even though there is a dependency upon the results of acts, policies and circumstances.

A second problem of application arises over how the phrase, "gain

over its previous position in the international system," is to be understood. Note the distinction between this phrase and the expression, "gain over another state or other states in the international system." The latter expression is constructed in such a way that a gain for one actor implies a loss for another. In the first phrase no such bias about the nature of the international system or of the interaction between states is implied. Space is provided for the results of state activity to be fixed-sum or non-fixed-sum.

Some confusion still remains over the meaning of "gain over its previous position in the international system." Suppose Brazil adopted policies in 1960 which were designed to increase her total GNP by 10% yearly. Further, let it be assumed that these policies were successful so that by 1970 Brazil had doubled its GNP in comparison with its GNP in 1960. Let it be also assumed that this gain increased the potential and real opportunities of Brazilians (e.g. more liquid assets, more jobs, a better standing of living). If the concept of national interests were meant to be applied to the domestic, internal conditions of states, then these policies would be in the national interests of Brazil. However, policies so designed should be referred to as "public interests" rather than national interests because of their domestic impact. Conversely, national interests are opportunities existing either in the relations between states or in the international system as a whole. This can be demonstrated by taking the Brazilian example a step further. Let it be hypothesized that in the ten years between 1960 and 1970 the world GNP increased by 200%. Has Brazil increased its opportunities to gain over its previous position in the international system, thereby increasing its potential to obtain goals in the international system? Obviously, Brazil

would not have kept pace with the total world product. It can be concluded, therefore, that Brazil would probably have less impact on international monetary questions; that it would have little impact on the prices of its principal exports; and that its opportunities have not been sufficiently increased to provide Brazil with the means to gain a better position in the international system.

In the above situation Brazil has bettered its domestic position relative to its 1960 domestic position. However, it has not increased its opportunities in the international system to gain over its previous position in that system. A viable interpretation of "gain over its previous position in the international system" is dependent, then, upon a clear separation of increases in domestic opportunities and increases in international opportunities. This is not to say that an increase in domestic opportunities for gain, such as resource development, or expertise, cannot be in the national interests of a state. Rather, it confirms that such domestic increases in opportunities must be related to a state's position in the international system. It should always be asked whether a particular policy will maintain or increase a state's opportunities to better its position, given the present international system and given the present position of a member in that system.

A third problem of application can be expressed in terms of the controversy over the use of assets or opportunities once they are secured. A state may make such poor use of its increased opportunities that it finds itself in a worse position in the international system. Surely this outcome is not in the national interests of a state. However, the proposed definition omits any reference to the use of increased opportunities. Whether a state actually gains over its previous position in the system is

irrelevant to a determination of what is in a state's interests, though an analysis of the use of opportunities is central in determining whether a state actually gains a better position. States employ increased opportunities in further activity to obtain many kinds of foreign policy goals, some of which include advancing the ends of other states. To consider the use of assets as an integral part of the meaning of what is in a state's national interests would be to affirm the subjectivity of the concept since what a state's opportunities are used for is dependent upon an analysis of the values of states. An inquiry into the best way for a state to use its assets involves value preferences; an inquiry into what is in a state's national interests does not. Questions about how a state ought to use its assets only arise <u>after</u> a determination has been made that a state has indeed increased its opportunities.

A final problem of application is the time dimension. At what point in time must an accounting of results take place to determine if an act, policy or circumstance is in a state's interests? This problem was referred to earlier in connection with Barry's analysis of interests. No adequate solution to it is offered in this study. Arbitrariness is bound to result in determining when to measure interest-maintenance or interest-enhancement. One way of dealing with this problem, though not a solution, lies in the direction of setting artificial time limits. An investigator may have to say that at T_2, an arbitrary point, 'x' is or is not in A's national interests in relation to some previous point in time, T_1. The results of acts and policies need only show an increase in opportunities for gain, not an actual gain for the state over its previous position in the international system.

D. The Pursuit of National Interests

The pursuit of interests in international relations is an important activity of all states. States seek to maintain or increase their opportunities to gain over their previous positions in the international system. However, not all acts and policies of states are designed to increase a state's own opportunities for gain. Some acts of states are specifically constructed to help other international actors. For example, grants of aid to Italian earthquake victims is not in Canada's interests, though it is right for Canada to send such aid. Thus, some acts and policies of states are designed to maximize the realization of principles transcending interests. Furthermore, the results of acts and policies which are in a state's interests are not always used to accomplish the self-directed goals of a state. Increased resources such as wealth, power, and status can be applied to advance the ends of other actors. When increased opportunities are applied in this way, principles are allowed to override a state's concern to achieve a better position in the international system.

The purposes for proposing a unique definition of national interests are two-fold. In the first place, this definition distinguishes acts and policies which tend to increase an actor's opportunities for gain from those that tend toward the realization of principles. One of the advantages in making this distinction is that the student of international relations is more readily able to understand what states do and why they adopt particular acts and policies. In the second place, the proposed concept of national interests lays the groundwork for the following chapters. Development of a theory of justice in international relations depends on an accurate portrayal of state activity. If much of state

activity is devoted to the pursuit of what is in a state's national interests, then satisfactory principles of justice in international relations must account for this activity. What states do and what is important to them limits the possible principles decision-makers are capable of agreeing to for the future regulation of international society.

CHAPTER 5

The Rationality of Decision-Makers and the Conditions of International Society

Introduction

If conflicts over opportunities between states do not preclude a discussion of justice in international relations, they remain as essential limiting features in the international environment.[1] Decision-makers of states want to gain opportunities for their states. These means contribute to a state's potential to realize its ends.

In the present international system it is unlikely that a conception of international justice could be agreed to by all states. Decision-makers do not see far beyond their own states' concerns, and the opportunities of states are often in conflict. To generate a conception of justice between states it is necessary to make some special assumptions about the motivation and rationality of decision-makers. These assumptions are argued for in the present chapter. They are intended to meet the judgments of international scholars about the facts of the international system. This is the first step in the presentation of a contract model of justice for international relations. However, even if these assumptions are acceptable, they are not sufficient to generate a conception of international justice. In the following chapter, the second

---

[1] Kenneth Thompson concurs: "If the national interest does not exhaust the possibility of ethical principles, it is always the necessary starting point." Kenneth Thompson, "Normative Theory in International Relations," in Farrell and Smith, ed., Theory and Reality in International Relations (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1967), p. 97.

step in generating a contract model is elucidated: Decision-makers of states are placed in a fictional original setting and are required unanimously to adopt specific principles of justice.

The order of presentation of this chapter is as follows: First, I discuss efforts in traditional political philosophy, as represented by Hume, Mill, Rousseau and Hobbes, to deduce a conception of justice from motivational assumptions about individuals. This should help the reader in clarifying the differences between customary assumptions and the ones I will adopt in regard to the behavior of decision-makers. Second, assumptions about the motivation and rationality of decision-makers are proposed and argued. Third, the condition of states in international society is examined. Throughout, the aim is to make "weak assumptions" about the psychology of decision-makers and states so that these assumptions are in congruence with the reality of international relations. For example, it would be unrealistic to base the contract on strong assumptions about man's benevolence toward other men.

A. Attempts to Deduce a Conception of Justice in Traditional Political Philosophy

Of those who have written on the organization of the state and the structure of society, many have made assumptions about the motivation and rationality of individuals. The following remarks are limited to some of the more well-known utilitarian and contractarian efforts to deduce a conception of justice from particular assumptions.

1. Utilitarian Assumptions

Utilitarians have often attempted to derive a conception of justice from premises about human interests. It is claimed that justice derives from the interest each actor has in gaining advantages for himself. In

his Treatise of Human Nature, David Hume contends that the principal foundation of justice is interest "when men observe that it is impossible to live in society without restraining themselves by certain rules".[2] The idea of justice would be unnecessary, Hume argues, if men were benevolent and if goods were abundant.[3] Hume is making an empirical claim about the motivation of men: Where goods are scarce men seek to advance their interests, with or without the aid of rules to guide their conduct. Given the latter state of society, where there are no rules, it is not possible for any one to secure his goods or the means to them. The need arises for conventional rules by which conflicting claims can be adjudicated. It is in the interest of each, Hume reasons, to secure the general advantage or common interest arising from these rules.[4]

Hume makes a second motivational assumption: Actors outside their familial social relationships have a "violent propensity to prefer contiguous to remote".[5] Men, we learn, are beings of passion who prefer immediate gain to long-run advantage. It is within this context that Hume divides the concept of interest into two distinct parts: contiguous interest and remote interest. Contiguous interest is non-rational because it is tied to the passions and is directed to immediate gain. Remote interest is defined as the long-run interest that each member of society has in the maintenance and stability of society. The latter is a rational idea

---

[2]David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, Part 2, Section 6, in Henry D. Aiken, ed., Hume's Moral and Political Philosophy (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1972), p. 96.

[3]Ibid., Part 2, Section 2, pp. 64-65. See also Hume's An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals, Section 4, in ibid., p. 202.

[4]David Hume, "Of the First Principles of Government," in ibid., p. 307.

[5]op. cit., A Treatise of Human Nature, Part 1, Section 7, p. 99.

and, therefore, an idea of reason because it is not blinded by the immediate. It is instrumental in the regulation of the passions.

A third assumption is made about the nature of man: Man has the potential to act on the basis of his long-run interest. It is from this potentiality that Hume extracts conventional rules of justice. This, of course, would be an ingenious way of extracting rules of justice if two conditions were found to be true: 1. That man's potentiality for perceiving the remote interest is present. 2. That man is capable of preferring the remote interest to the more immediate. Yet in Hume's own analysis the passions of men obscure their vision. Even when their vision is not clouded the preference given to their immediate circle of relationships is likely to influence their choice. Beings of passion are not disposed to act on the basis of their remote interest as codified in conventional rules.

Though men cannot alter their natures, they can, as Hume puts it, change their circumstances and make the observance of justice the immediate concern of those charged with the administration of government.[6] Men change their circumstances through the potential of each to see the remote interest. This motivational assumption is too strong. We see why it is too strong when Hume turns to the relations between states:

> When a number of political societies are erected, and maintain a great intercourse together, a new set of rules are immediately discovered to be useful in the particular situation; and accordingly take place under the title of Law of Nations ... which are plainly calculated for the advantage of states and kingdoms in their intercourse with each other.[7]

---

[6] Ibid., p. 100.

[7] op. cit., An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals, p. 202.

An important question is begged. Why would self-interested men (or decision-makers), motivated by their passions rather than their reason, "discover" that certain rules are useful for the ordering of their mutual relations? Failing in this, how could each man agree to make it the business of a few persons to order the relations of all the rest? Hume's first two motivational assumptions, that men are not benevolent and that men are disposed to favor the immediate, appear to make very unlikely the potential of men to act on the remote interest.

In Hume, rules of justice are somehow found to be useful since they contribute to the advantage of all members of society. It is questioned whether those rules can be acted on, given Hume's motivational postulates. Apparently, even Hume is aware of the limited application of his deduction. He settles for a weak conclusion:

> History, experience, reason sufficiently instruct us in this natural progress of human sentiments and in the gradual enlargement of our regards to justice, in proportion as we become acquainted with the extensive utility of that virtue.[8]

This is a historical claim. As men become acquainted with the utility of justice over time, they develop an attachment to rules of justice. But this is a lesser claim than the motivational assumption about man's potential to act in his long-run interest in the absence of an extended time period.

Rules of justice are derived, in Hume, from the potential of men to perceive and prefer the remote interest. If this motivational assumption is not reasonable, then the deduction does not follow. His

---

[8] Ibid., p. 192.

utilitarian theory relies upon the criteria of usefulness and beneficial consequences in its assessment of the various virtues, including justice. Even if it can be established that rules of justice are conducive to the maintenance of society, it is unlikely that Hume's motivational postulate can establish the interest of each in such a scheme. Rules of justice seem to presuppose disadvantages to each that are not always in their interests, immediate or remote.[9] For example, a rule of international justice could require that states fulfill their contractual obligations. Let us suppose that Canada contracts with Russia to deliver ten million bushels of wheat in 1978. Suppose further that Canada has a disastrous wheat yield in 1977 due to natural calamities, labor strikes, etc. Let us assume that Canada barely has enough wheat to supply its own people and that this commodity is necessary to the survival of its people. Given this hypothetical situation (which is not so hypothetical when attention shifts to the third world), is it always in the interests of Canada to fulfill its contract, short-run or long run? If Canada carries out its obligation, some of its people starve. To reiterate, a system of justice implies that certain disadvantageous acts be discharged which are never in an actor's interests.

I have queried the validity of Hume's motivational postulate that each has the potential to act on the basis of long-run interest. In addition, I have argued that even if this premise could be established, it

---

[9] See David Gauthier for a lucid defense of the proposition that any moral principle entails the performance of disadvantageous acts. David Gauthier, "Morality and Advantage," in David Gauthier, ed., Morality and Rational Self-Interest (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970), pp. 166-180.

is not possible to maintain that each actor will always have an interest in a scheme of justice.

Justice, in John Stuart Mill, is derived from even stronger motivational assumptions than those Hume uses. His first motivational assumption is that there is a natural basis for establishing a utilitarian morality. Man has more than the mere potential to see the long-run interest. Mill explains:

> But there is this basis of powerful natural sentiment ... This firm foundation is that of social feelings of mankind; the desire to be in unity with our fellow creature, which is already a powerful principle in human nature.[10]

This natural basis for rules of justice is derived from the desire to be in harmony with other men. Mill makes an empirical statement in support of this natural harmony: Men, in fact, cannot bring themselves to think of all others as rivals in the struggle for the means to happiness.[11] This leads to Mill's second motivational assumption: Man has the capability of cooperation with others and of identifying his interests with those of others. Man is a creature of sympathy as much as he is a being with self-interested motives:

> Not only does all strengthening of social ties, and all healthy growth of society give to each individual a stronger personal interest in practically consulting the welfare of others; it also leads him to identify his feelings more and more with their good ... The good of others becomes to him a thing naturally and necessarily to be attended to ... he is urged by the strongest motives both of interest and of sympathy to demonstrate it...[12]

---

[10] John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism, Part 3, in Max Lerner, ed., Essential Works of John Stuart Mill (New York: Bantam Classic, 1961), p. 217.

[11] Ibid., p. 219. Man is imbued with this social feeling, in Mill.

[12] Ibid., p. 218.

A third motivational assumption in Mill's Utilitarianism is that man is endowed with a natural sentiment of reciprocity. Thus, relationships between men are based on mutual expectation. "Good for good," suggests Mill, "carries with it a natural human feeling ... He who accepts benefits, and denies a return of them when needed, inflicts a real hurt, by disappointing one of the most natural and reasonable of expectations."[13]

Mill's three motivational postulates, the desire of each person to be in harmony with all the rest; the capability of each to cooperate with others and to sympathize with their interests; and the feelings of reciprocity, contribute to his deduction of rules of justice. The idea of justice is derivative from natural sentiments. Are these assumptions acceptable? Couldn't it be argued that these sentiments are a product of education and moral learning rather than instinct? If these feelings are sui generis, then it is difficult to see why injustice is so prevalent in society. These sentiments should be powerful enough to generate a conception of justice in all societies, at all times. His assumptions are much too strong for building a theory of justice in international relations.

If his assumptions are correct, decision-makers of states should be capable of "proposing to themselves a collective not an individual, interest as the aim ... of their actions."[14] But given the history of international relations, such a collective interest is unlikely to result from strong motivational assumptions. Decision-makers' sympathies seldom encompass what is in the national interests of other states. How long could a diplomat maintain his position if he were to weigh the needs and aims of

---

[13] ibid., p. 245.
[14] ibid., p. 218.

his own state by a standard that is for the benefit of other states as well as his own? Mill's motivational postulates are unrealistic for international relations. They demand too much of individuals (and even more from decision-makers).

2. Contractarian Assumptions

Hume and Mill are committed to making strong motivational assumptions in deriving their rules for society. Their theories are dependent upon the constraints of a particular time period and bound by the social feelings of existing actors. To achieve the most good possible carried over all members of society, they are compelled to recognize or establish the possibility of each actor being motivated by considerations that extend beyond his own interests. A contractarian need not make strong motivational assumptions. In order to derive a theory of justice the contractarian can place conditions on the choice situation rather than on the actors themselves. The contractarian advances some fictional or imaginary idea of contract to facilitate the connection between self-interests and principles of justice.

Jean Jacques Rousseau depends upon both motivational assumptions and a theory of contract in deducing a conception of justice. Rousseau's investigation into the nature of the relations between men begins with this question:

> ... as the force and liberty of each man are the chief instruments of his self-preservation, how can he pledge them without harming his own interests, and neglecting the care he owes to himself?[15]

---

[15] Jean Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract, Book 1., translated by G. D. H. Cole, The Social Contract and Discourses (New York: E. P. Hutton and Company, 1950), p. 13.

For Rousseau, the answer to this question is that each associate agrees to alienate all of his rights to the whole community and by doing so, he gains new advantages in return for those he loses in the state of nature. In contracting for the advantages of the social state the contractee, it is presumed, gains stability, reciprocity and justice in his social relationships. What he loses is his "natural right" to the means whereby he can gain advantages in matters concerning the community as a whole. In a word, he alienates his interests.

By employing the concept of a fictional contract, Rousseau appears to have tied interest pursuits to a conception of justice. What remains to be assessed are the conditions of actors prior to contractual agreement. What motivational assumptions does Rousseau make about the nature of man? Men must limit their interest, according to Rousseau, if they are to make it active.[16] He suggests that men in the pre-contractual state are capable of seeing others as situated similarly to themselves, of feeling compassion for them, and of finding points of agreement between them. Rousseau posits the following circumstance in the state of nature:

> For if the clashing of particular interests made the establishment of societies necessary, the agreement of these very interests made it possible. The common element in these different interests is what forms the social tie; and, were there no point of agreement between them all, no society could exist.[17]

Though men have conflicting interests, Rousseau attempts to establish that they also have common interests. Actors contract with one another

---

[16] Rousseau, A Discourse on Political Economy, in Ibid., p. 301.

[17] op. cit., The Social Contract, Book 2, p. 23.

on the basis of these latter interests. But is this condition of common interests present? Even if it is present is it sufficient to lead individuals to adopt principles for their mutual conduct?

In answer to the first question, it is difficult to imagine how actors who share only sporadic social relations can recognize a common interest. Nonetheless, Rousseau is prepared to acknowledge the existence of such an interest. Even if this premise is forfeited to Rousseau, it is unlikely that one would agree with him that this is a shared or mutual interest. Yet this is exactly what he maintains:

> The undertakings which bind us to the social body are obligatory only because they are mutual; and their nature is such that in fulfilling them we cannot work for others without working for ourselves ... This proves that equality of rights and the idea of justice which such quality creates originate in the preference each man gives to himself.[18]

Implanted in Rousseau's account of individual interests is the motivational assumption that men are capable of discerning the like interests of others. Implicit in the idea that each gives preference to his own interests is the condition that men are capable of recognizing and acting upon a mutual interest, and not merely a coincidental one.

Even if these fertile assumptions obtain, Rousseau does not provide an adequate answer to the second question: Is the common interest sufficient to generate principles of justice? Common interests or mutuality, alone, cannot be the work-horse for the adoption of such principles. No matter how shared actors' interests may be, this fact might allow them to avoid raising questions of justice. After all, though the family is the social unit where one would most likely find the kind of common interests

---

[18] Ibid., p. 29.

Rousseau envisions, it is also at the same time the unit where problems of justice seldom arise and when they do, are often solved on an ad hoc basis.[19]

Rousseau seeks to provide a general perspective from which one can assess the rightness of acts and decisions. This perspective is the general will. Among other things, this requires each to submit to the conditions he imposes on others.[20] This is a moral principle. It is derived from two distinct sources. It is deduced from the conditions imposed on actors (where each chooses for all the rest). And it is deduced from motivational postulates about the nature of man. This second deduction is the one questioned here. To act on the basis of moral feelings about man's sympathetic nature or about his ability to identify his interests with others is problematic, given man's awareness of his own circumstances and those of others.

Hobbes' concept of common interest is narrower than Rousseau's. For Hobbes, the common interest of actors is simply the interest each has in security and self-preservation. He does not import mutuality into the meaning of common interest. Also, his idea of justice is very limited. Justice is defined as obedience to contract; the term has no meaning without the means of enforcement.[21] Rousseau, unlike Hobbes, broadens the scope of justice to include the prescription that others do only those

---

[19] In response to appeals of justice children often receive the reply that, "There is neither democracy nor justice in this household." Families may be bound by many ties of affection or common interests without considering the justice of their inter-relations.

[20] Rousseau, op. cit., The Social Contract, Book 1, p. 30, Book 3, p. 97.

[21] Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, in Francis Randall, ed., Leviathan (N.Y.: Washington Square Press, 1969), Ch. 15, p. 97. Also see the introduction to The Citizen, in Bernard Gert, ed., Man and Citizen (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1972), p. 24.

things that we are willing to do ourselves. Hobbes' idea of justice is not similarly dependent upon an advanced conception of social relations.

Another difference between the two philosophers is to be found in the motivational assumptions they apply. Hobbesian man is predominately concerned with his own preservation; he is not motivated to contract on the basis of fair dealing or mutuality. Interests are explained in terms of security; justice in terms of the best way to guarantee that security. What binds the Hobbesian citizen to the social body is not social mutuality, but mutual fear. Fear actually cajoles man to reason about their state of existence without civil society. This process of reasoning leads men to the recognition that the non-performance of promises made, or the performance of deceptive practices, is self-defeating since each man can only rely upon his own power.[22] A breach of justice is against reason for two reasons. First, it is an implicit denial of the good of self-preservation.[23] Second, it is a rejection of the means of preservation and "every man, by reasoning, seeks out the means to the end which he propounds to himself".[24]

In Hobbes, interests and justice are conjoined in the following way: Because interests are motivated by the passions and are generally directed toward present benefits, the faculty of reason is often distorted. Sense of the immediate tends to overcome the work of reason which is aimed at the future good.[25] Nonetheless, the possibility of reasoning remains

---

[22] op. cit., Leviathan, Part 15., p. 100.

[23] op. cit., The Citizen, Part 6, Section 3, p. 176. "Security is the end wherefore men submit themselves to others."

[24] Ibid., Part 14, Section 16, p. 282.

[25] Ibid., Part 3, Section 31, p. 151.

intact. Men continue to seek a process whereby they can secure their future desires.[26] The idea of justice establishes this procedure. Discernible through reason by the several contractees, it creates the bonds of contract and establishes the Leviathan who is to be the guarantor of the conditions of contract. Justice (the keeping of covenants) is a kind of rule which facilitates the satisfaction of the objects of men's desires by directing and tracking their movement.[27] The Leviathan ensures that the parties keep their covenants; it is analogous in certain respects to the air-traffic controller par excellence.

Interests, in Hobbes, tend to be expressed in terms of desires and self-preservation. As well, each contractee has an interest in the means of securing the way of his future desires. The Leviathan is to guarantee justice. Thus, men have an interest in such an entity.

Common to both Rousseau and Hobbes is the concept of a common interest that each actor has in contracting for procedural rules of justice. Where Rousseau relies heavily upon mutuality and the sentiment of justice, Hobbes is more inclined to advance man's need for security and self-preservation as the principal perspective from which man can reason about, and agree to, the conditions of contract. Though both authors begin with self-regrrding premises, Rousseau insists on the primordial grain of justice inherent in each person while Hobbes places his trust in reason to spark the movement to justice. In both thinkers reliance is placed on the common element of interest. Hobbes' idea of

---

[26] op. cit., Leviathan, Part 11, p. 64.

[27] Ibid., Part 30, p. 250. The purpose of a rule is "not to bind the people from all voluntary actions; but to direct and keep them in such a motion as not to hurt themselves by their own impetuous desires..."

interest is, however, divorced from any idea of social mutuality; it is self-directed and each person is motivated more by fear than anything else.

In this section I have examined some of the more obvious motivational assumptions which philosophers have applied in generating their conceptions of justice. It has been argued that some of these assumptions, such as man's natural sympathy or his potential to identify the interests of others with his own, are too strong. I have also elucidated Hobbes' concept of man's potential to reason. The following discussion is about the motivations and rationality of decision-makers. In it, only the weakest of assumptions are set forth. These assumptions are meant to reflect the scholar's judgment about the facts of the international system.

B. Motivation and Rationality of Decision-Makers

There appear to be two ways in which principles of justice in international relations can be derived from what is in an actor's interests. The first way has been analyzed above. One can make strong assumptions about man's inherent potential for sympathy or his capability to identify what is in his own interests with those of others. Man is either naturally motivated or can reason his way to general principles of justice. The second approach to the derivation of principles of justice for international relations rests on weak motivational and rational postulates. Principles of justice are extracted by placing strong conditions on the choice situation rather than on decision-makers themselves.

How are decision-makers motivated? They can be thought of as being mutually disinterested.[28] Decision-makers in one state are neither

---

[28] From this point to the end of the thesis I rely extensively upon the terminology and arguments provided in John Rawls' A Theory of Justice (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 1971). Mutual disinterest is one such term (p. 13).

motivated benevolently nor malevolently toward the opportunities of other states. What this means is that decision-makers want to advance the opportunities of their own state regardless of what is in the interests of other states. No particular motivational postulates are imputed to decision-makers in their relations with other states. They are not to be thought of as having extensive sentimental ties to their counterparts in other states. However, the mutual disinterest postulate does not preclude such ties of affection between decision-makers. Clearly, the Versailles summit meetings between Woodrow Wilson, Lloyd George and Clemenceau exhibited a comraderie between leaders. However, the reality of international relations suggests that such ties are ephemeral. A theory of justice in international relations cannot rest on strong ties of affection between decision-makers or states. The recent Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, held in Helsinki, more accurately depicts actual relations between decision-makers. Signatories to the agreement wished to maximize the opportunities of their own states. U.S. decision-makers campaigned for broader East-West contacts (opening access to East Berlin, for example) whereas the Soviets wanted to gain formal recognition of the postwar frontiers in Europe. Their rationale for signing this agreement is based on the supposition that the declaration will create opportunities for their separate states or at least formalize past opportunities. No extensive sentimental ties were necessary for the signing of this agreement. Furthermore, the undercurrent of bi-lateral negotiations and hard bargaining between two states (Canadian and Russian discussions over fishing disputes) would seem to be the kind of activity that more accurately reflects the relations between decision-makers. Again, no sentimental ties between decision-makers need be assumed.

A consequence of the mutual disinterest postulate is that decision-makers are to be viewed as trying to maximize what is in the national interests of their own states. This is their function. Is this assumption acceptable from the scholar's point of reference? In relation to the preceeding assumptions philosophers have made in deriving their conceptions of a just ordering of human relations, the mutual disinterest postulate is a more accurate portrayal of the motivations of decision-makers. It does not assume strong ties of affection or a natural affinity for other decision-makers. On the other hand, it does not assume that diplomats are malevolent toward one another. Examination of the nature of man has not advanced the study of the behavior of states. The idealist-realist debate did not contribute to our understanding of international relations because of its misguided focus on man's nature. Neither side to this debate could get the other side to agree on initial premises. The mutual disinterest postulate would seem to provide a ground-zero agreement point for the study of international relations which has been absent in the past.

One may object that the postulate of mutual disinterestedness fails to account for the concern other decision-makers <u>do</u> have with one another's opportunities. Surely, one might continue, successful diplomacy is dependent upon an accurate assessment of the acts and policies of other states. Mutual perception must be an important aspect of interstate behavior. However, though decision-makers often base their choice of policies on their perceptions of how other states will act and react, this in itself does not deny the mutual disinterest postulate. The only condition under which this premise would not apply would be one where the opportunities in the system are fixed-sum. Then, of course, decision-

makers would be principally concerned with wrestling away fixed opportunities from other states. It is assumed that in the present international system decision-makers are generally disinterested in other states' opportunities because they can still attempt to gain opportunities without necessarily increasing or decreasing other states' opportunities. Decision-makers are not required to ignore what is in the national interests of other states when they have access to this information. Rather, mutual disinterest only suggests that decision-makers usually act on the basis of bettering their own states' positions relative to previous positions, regardless of the positions of other states.

Decision-makers are rational. Their states need to acquire opportunities in order to promote both the ends of foreign policy conduct and to further their states conceptions of "the good life". Whatever the ends of a state are, decision-makers prefer more opportunities to less. It is postulated that the essence of rationality in international relations consists in acquiring more of the generalized means for the promotion of particular aims. These means are equivalent to what is in a state's interests. They include wealth, power, status and liberty. Without them, states cannot broaden their opportunities to gain over their previous positions in the international system. A rational decision-maker is one who realizes that he must accumulate more of these opportunities if his state is to achieve more of its ends. To recall from the previous chapter, how these resources are used once they are obtained is not important for our purposes. It could be argued *ad infinitum* whether the explosion of nuclear energy is in the national interests of India. If that event is viewed as a waste of an important

natural resource that could provide India with more hydroelectric power it is obviously not in her interests. However, it could be viewed as being in the national interests of India if the explosion creates a previously non-existent status (India has become a member of the still select "nuclear club").

What has been elicited thus far in regard to the rationality of decision-makers should not be misconstrued. It is still possible for a state to misinterpret what is in its national interests; and it is still possible for decision-makers to enact policies which are opposed to the national interests of their states. The postulate of rationality in decision-making extends no further than the preference decision-makers have for enlarging their states' opportunities.

The question that arises is how decision-makers can turn this preference into a working scheme that is to the advantage of all states. Given the existing international system, where decision-makers have access to the knowledge of their own states' positions in the international system, choice of such a scheme is an impossibility. The United States would choose a scheme that favored the more prosperous states whereas Bangladesh would opt for a design of the international system that favored the least advantaged states. To derive a choice of principles of justice for international relations it is necessary to abstract from the facts of the international system. It will be necessary to place decision-makers in an original setting where they are not aware of which states they represent.[29]

---

[29]The concept of an original setting is derived from two sources. Original is taken from Rawls' original position. Setting is borrowed from the internal and external setting of decision-making found in Richard Snyder et. al. (eds.), Foreign Policy Decision-Making: An Approach to the Study of International Politics (New York: The Free Press, 1962).

Rationality in decision-making is not dependent upon access to all of the facts involved in making a particular decision. John Rawls has captured this point most vividly:

> ... the rationality of a person's choice does not depend upon how much he knows, but only how well he reasons from whatever information he has, however incomplete.[30]

Decision-makers wish to maximize the opportunities of their states, even in the event that they do not know which states they represent.[31] If the original setting is properly structured, rationality in decision-making would require that decision-makers adopt the scheme that most contributes to their states' ability to advance its ends. Since opportunities are required to realize any of a state's aims, decision-makers must choose the scheme that tends to maximize the opportunities of their states to better their positions in the international system.

C. The Conditions of International Society

States are subject to the conditions of international society.[32] These may be viewed as background conditions that give rise to the need for principles of justice in international relations. Without them, there would be no need for principles of justice; questions of justice would not arise. Just as Hobbes sets forth the condition of mutual fear

---

[30] John Rawls, A Theory of Justice, p. 397.

[31] For an assessment of the usefulness and limitations of rationality models in international relations see Sidney Verba, "Assumptions of Rationality and Non-Rationality in Models of the International System," in Klaus Knorr and Sidney Verba (editors), The International System (N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 93-117).

[32] Ibid., pp. 126-130. John Rawls is concerned to show that the circumstances of justice apply to the domestic environment. It would appear that these circumstances apply to the international environment with even more plausibility since there is no central authority; no common culture, etc.

to drive persons into society, the following conditions are set forth to direct states toward a workable conception of justice.

These conditions may be divided into two parts: The risk-role of states and the separate life-plans of states. That all states pursue generalized opportunities places each state, in relation to the international system, in the same role: How best to increase one's opportunities and, thereby, act on what is in one's national interests in an environment of uncertainty. In this environment, perceptions are often mistaken, knowledge is lacking, time is often restricted, rules are ephemeral, and the resources at a state's disposal are limited.[33] Risk-role is defined in terms of uncertainty and scarcity. Risk is ubiquitous. Decision-makers seldom are certain that the adoption of acts and policies will secure scarce opportunities. Both powerful and weak states are subject to the risk-role. The United States cannot be sure that its policies will create opportunities any more than the decision-makers of Guatemala can be sure that their policies will lead to opportunities for gain. Though the kinds of policies the decision-makers of the United States adopt may be more extensive and may have a greater impact on the international system than those adopted by Guatemala, the common denominator of risk-role is shared by the decision-makers in both states.

A parallel with Hobbes' treatise becomes apparent: No state is in a position to over-power all of the rest. The capacities of decision-makers are similar in the sense that all are subject to having their

---

[33] During crises these conditions are more salient than during normal periods. For a recent evaluation of crisis literature see James M. McCormick, "Evaluating Models of Crisis Behavior: Some evidence from the Middle East," International Studies Quarterly, Volume 19, No. 1, (March, 1975), pp. 17-45.

policies impeded; all are vulnerable to attack. None can advance policies which are in their national interests with certainty. This is one aspect of the risk-role. The other aspect is scarcity of natural resources. States are not self-sufficient. Though the opportunities to be obtained in the international system are not fixed or scarce, they are scarce relative to any particular state. Decision-makers of states must trade with other states to obtain the resources they need to advance their aims. If there were an abundance of natural resources in each state there would be no need for cooperation. However, many of the present international disputes are over rights to resources such as oil and fish. Even countries that are rich in one particular resource (oil, in the case of the OPEC countries) are subject to the circumstances of scarcity. How long could the OPEC group advance their opportunities without the foodstuffs necessary to sustain their populations? Or how long could the United States advance its position without the uranium it must import for peaceful and military purposes? Scarcity, in this case, is a fact of international life.

The risk-role aspect to the conditions of international society provides the background setting that makes cooperation between states necessary. The possibility for cooperation exists between decision-makers of different states since cooperation can improve each state's position in the international system. But there is also the possibility of conflict since states are not indifferent to how the benefits derived from this cooperation are distributed.[34]

Risk-role does not exhaust the conditions of international society.

---

[34] op. cit., A Theory of Justice, p. 126.

Part two of these circumstances involves the separate life-plans of states. While the decision-makers of each state wish to advance the opportunities of their states, each state has a different conception of "the good life". The aims and goals of states vary because of these different ideas of the good. Decision-makers in each state attempt to advance their state's idea of good independently of the good of other states. Though decision-makers are indifferent to the good of other states, they are not indifferent to the distribution of potential opportunities. These opportunities always provide extra chances for a state to advance its conception of the good. The idea of mutual disinterest, as defined in the previous section, accounts for this aspect of the conditions of international society. Decision-makers are motivated to gain a larger share of opportunities for their states, uninhibited by feelings of benevolence or malevolence toward the life plans of other states.

Rawls summarizes the circumstances of justice, the domestic counterpart to the conditions of international society, in these words:

> ... the circumstances of justice obtain whenever mutually disinterested persons put forward conflicting claims to the division of social advantages under conditions of moderate scarcity.[35]

Uncertainty and scarcity of natural resources are the objective condition of international society that provide a common denominator in that all states are affected in similar ways by these environmental conditions. Mutual disinterest is a subjective condition of the international environment. The historical situation of states is such that they have different life-plans and goals they wish to achieve. Decision-makers

---

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 128.

are indifferent to other states' life plans. Their function is to advance their own states aims by increasing the means or opportunities at their states' disposal. Increased opportunities are always in their state's national interests.

These conditions of international society depict the reality of international relations. A theory of justice in international relations would not arise if decision-makers could be certain that their policies would increase their states' opportunities and if resources were abundant. At the same time, principles of justice must be congruent with these environmental conditions. It counts against a conception of justice if decision-makers could not act in accordance with it because of the facts of the international system.[36] For example, if decision-makers were motivated to be sympathetic toward the life-plans of other states, then the principles derived from this motivational postulate would not accord with the assumption of mutual disinterest. Similarly, principles deduced from a misinterpretation of the nature of the risk-role would not be in congruence with the reality of the international system.

Decision-makers pursue opportunities in an environment of uncertainty and scarcity. The pursuit of opportunities constrains the kinds of principles of justice acceptable in international relations. The decision-makers of each state, then, are subject to the conditions of international society. But these circumstances alone do not generate

---

[36] Rawls says something similar to this in relation to his contractees: "It is, for example, a consideration against a conception of justice that in view of the laws of moral psychology, men would not acquire desire to act upon it..." Ibid., p. 138.

principles of justice for the conduct of international behavior or the distribution of opportunities. Risk-role and mutual disinterest capture the context in which decision-makers presently interact. However, submission to this form of interaction is tantamount to no agreement on principles of justice. The actual division of opportunities is determined by the strategic positions of states resulting from prior and existing circumstances.[37] To derive adequate principles of justice for the future conduct of international relations, it is necessary to place decision-makers in an original setting where the choice of principles is not affected by their states' positions in the international system. Adoption of the contractarian approach presupposes that the conditions of international society obtain. What must be done in order to derive principles of justice is not to ignore these circumstances, but to place decision-makers in an original setting where they do not know how these circumstances will affect their own state's particular situation. One makes weak assumptions about the known reality of international relations and places strong conditions on the choice of principles in the original setting.

D. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined: (1) traditional motivational and rational postulates utilized in political philosophy for the derivation of conceptions of justice; (2) motivational and rational postulates of decision-makers; (3) the conditions of international society. It has

---

[37] ibid., p. 521. This statement parallels Raymond Aron's discussion of the strategic balance of force in international relations. See Raymond Aron, Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations (N.Y.: Frederick Praeger, 1968).

been argued that decision-makers are mutually disinterested; they do not take an interest in one another's interests. Rather, their function is to advance the opportunities of their own states regardless of what is in the interests of other actors. It has been assumed that whatever the ends of states, decision-makers are aware that increased opportunities are necessary means. The mutual disinterest postulate does not presuppose that decision-makers are either benevolent or malevolent in their external relations. Thus they are not to be thought of as being concerned with the life-plans of other states. It has also been argued that decision-makers are rational. They would rather have more opportunities than less since these always create additional chances for a state to advance its ends. In regard to the choice of principles of justice, rationality in decision-making requires that decision-makers choose the scheme that most maximizes the opportunities of states to better their positions in the international system. Under the rubric of the rationality postulate, it has also been contended that the rationality of a decision-maker's choice of principles does not depend upon how much he knows, but upon how he reasons from whatever information he has. I follow Rawls closely on this point. A rational choice of principles depends upon how decision-makers perceive the configuration of opportunities will be affected. They must always ask, "With the limited information given to me, which set of principles will tend to maximize the opportunities at my state's disposal?"

In the final section of this chapter, the conditions of international society have been articulated. These include the risk-role of states and the life-plans of states. Risk-role is divided into uncertainty and scarcity of natural resources. As a generic concept in international

relations, risk-role suggests that some amount of risk is present in the pursuit and attainment of opportunities. Though the constellation of forces in the international system seldom subjects states to the same amount of risk, the idea of uncertainty is universal in inter-state relations. Pursuit of opportunities often conflicts with the amount of risk a state is willing to take in gaining a better position in the international system. Scarcity of natural resources is the second part of the risk-role postulate. Decision-makers know that their states are not self-sufficient in natural resources. They must cooperate with other states to get the resources they need to advance their own states' aims. Risk-role, then, is common to all states. It is a background condition in the international system that makes cooperation both possible and necessary in the relations between states. The subjective circumstances of justice involves the separate life-plans of states. Each state is presumed to have its own ends which are independent of the ends of other states. Decision-makers are indifferent to the life-plans of other states and seek only to advance the opportunities of their own states. States have separate ends but utilize the same generalized means in advancing these ends.

Neither the postulates regarding decision-makers nor the conditions of international society guarantee that a conception of justice could be agreed to in the present international system. Just the same, without these postulates and conditions, questions of justice would not arise. Such questions are not generated when universal benevolence, certainty of conduct, and material abundance are present. The first step in the presentation of a contract model has now been completed. In the following chapter, an original setting is outlined in which decision-

makers must choose principles of justice under constrained circumstances. In Thomas C. Schelling's words, "Participants must be ready to allow the situation itself to exercise substantial constraint over the outcome."[38]

---

[38] Thomas C. Schelling, The Strategy of Conflict (N.Y.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1960), p. 75.

CHAPTER 6

The Contractees and the Original Setting in International Relations

Introduction

Contract theory focuses attention on the basic structure of the international system. Instead of asking, "What are the causes of war and the conditions of peace?", contract theory allows us to ask, "What are the preconditions and requirements of a just international order?" Short of Armageddon, the latter question is worthy of the scholar's attention and the contractarian approach provides a method whereby we can sharpen it.

In order to derive a contract model of justice for international relations, imagine that the decision-makers of states are placed in a hypothetical original setting of equality. Decision-makers are to determine unanimously the principles of justice by which their states are to be regulated in the future. The important point is that they are to choose in advance of more particular knowledge about their states' positions in the international system. Principles adopted in the original setting are to regulate all further agreements and interactions between states. These are the principles that rational representatives concerned about protecting and furthering the opportunities of their states would agree upon in an initial position of equality. John Rawls refers to this choice situation and the concommitant choice of principles for a domestic society as justice as fairness.[1]

---

[1] John Rawls, A Theory of Justice, pp. 11-17, p. 48, p. 563. "Just as one person is to decide upon his plan of life in the light of full information (no restrictions being imposed in this case), so a plurality of persons are to settle the terms of their cooperation in a situation that gives all fair representation as moral beings." ibid., p. 563.

In this chapter heavy reliance will be placed on John Rawls' interpretation of the original position.[2] Many of his stipulations will be incorporated into the international context. Alterations of his contract model are made sparingly and only where the differences between the domestic environment and any international environment warrant these changes. I proceed as follows: First, a justification for the use of the contract model in international relations. Second, identification of the contracting parties. Third, a description of the conditions imposed in the original setting. These conditions are divided into two subheadings: the veil of ignorance and the formal constraints on the choice of principles.[3]

A discussion of the principles of justice for international relations follows in the next two chapters. From the description of the original setting principles of justice for the structure of the international system will be derived. These principles are to determine (1) the rights and duties of states and (2) to regulate the pursuit and distribution of opportunities which are in states' national interests.

A. The Contract Model in International Relations: A Justification

Few students in the field of international relations would consider the contract model to be relevant to the discipline. After all, states constitute separate societies with their own histories, languages,

---

[2] See especially chapter three in A Theory of Justice, pp. 118-192. Richard A. Falk suggests that there is a concensus among international scholars that Rawls is relevant to the discipline. Richard A. Falk, "The Domains of Law and Justice," International Journal, Vol. 31, No. 1 p. 12, Winter (1975-1976).

[3] The veil of ignorance limits the kind of knowledge available to the parties whereas the formal constraints on the choice of principles limit the kinds of principles which can be chosen.

rules and authoritative structures. The founders of contract theory usually were writing about particular societies that shared these features or at least a sufficient number of the features to derive missing requirements. This is not the case in international relations. Even if the problem of the diverse features of distinct states could be surmounted, there seems to be no evidence in recent history for supposing the possibility of a coercive and authoritative apparatus which could regulate the opportunities of states. Stanley Hoffman aptly depicts the nature of the discipline. International relations, he suggests, is "the science of the absence of power".[4]

That which has been written on the subject of justice in international relations tends to fall into two categories: (1) specific issues of human rights, treaty obligations and international court cases; (2) general topics including the need for re-distribution and the "imperialist" literature.[5] No outline for a theory of justice in international relations has been attempted for the contemporary international system. International scholars seem to be saying: No international community, no international justice. Before reasons can be set forth for studying the application of contractarian theory to international relations it is

---

[4]Stanley Hoffman, The State of War (N.Y.: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965), pp. 3-21. Hoffman argues that the laws of domestic political science cannot be transposed into the international setting because an authoritative structure is missing in the latter environment.

[5]Scholars in international law would be principally concerned with specific issues. For example, see Leslie Green, "Human Rights and Canada's Indians," Israel Yearbook on Human Rights, Vol. 1, 1972. Under general topics see Barbara Ward, The Rich Nations and the Poor Nations, Johan Galtung, "A Structural Theory of Integration," Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 5, No. 4 (1968), Richard Barnet, Global Reach, Harry Magdoff, The Age of Imperialism, and Hedley Bull, "Order vs. Justice in International Society," Political Studies, Vol. XIX, No. 3, (269-283), Sept. 1971.

necessary to consider very briefly the major competitor to contractarian justice, utilitarianism.

A utilitarian theory of justice maintains that actions are right if they promote the general happiness or common good, wrong if they promote the absence of happiness. The directive rule of human conduct is to maximize the total amount of good carried over all members of society. A utilitarian is not concerned to maximize the well-being of each agent, but the well-being of the whole community.[6] Institutions are to be arranged in a manner which guarantees the greatest sum of satisfaction. Utilitarianism is arrived at by adopting for society a principle of choice for one man: "It is this spectator who is conceived as carrying out the required organization of the desires of all persons into one coherent system of desire; it is by this construction that many persons are fused into one".[7] Rawls states that utilitarianism does not take the distinction between persons seriously.

Each state in the international system demands sovereignty; each state demands that it be treated on an equal basis with all others. This fact would militate against acceptance of the utilitarian ethic in international relations. Decision-makers of states could not be expected to assent to a structure that is indifferent to how the sum of opportunities are distributed. Yet this is the implication of the utilitarian doctrine. What counts is not how rights and benefits are allocated, but maximizing the total amount of benefits. Can one realistically expect Chad to agree to a lesser amount of satisfaction so that the total can be maximized for the

---

[6] John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism, op. cit., pp. 198-199.

[7] A Theory of Justice, p. 27.

rest? To maximize the net balance of satisfaction taken over all states it might be necessary that third world countries settle for less. It is a cruel irony of the present international system that most of the countries must settle for a lesser share of wealth, resources, education, development and the generalized means of livelihood so that a few more fortunate states can maximize their own prospects. A utilitarian scheme could have the same kinds of consequences on the international system that exist today. The greater gains of some could outweigh the losses of others. Since decision-makers are concerned to advance what is in the national interests of their states regardless of the interests of others, and independent of the total amount of opportunities in the international system, they could never agree to an order which might have consequences they could not accept. They certainly would not consent to a procedure that implies the possibility of the denial of sovereignty to some of their states. Utilitarianism denies the distinction between separate states pursuing generalized opportunities for distinct purposes.

A contractarian approach to justice in international relations is an alternative to utilitarianism. Why would a scholar of international relations want to apply contractarian theory to the international system? In the first place, by adopting this approach one could avoid the entanglements and complexities inherent in the international system. To see clearly we must often simplify. An appropriate design of the contractarian original setting simplifies by making certain assumptions. It assumes, for example, that the decision-makers of states do not know which states they represent. This assumption is appealing because it controls for the pronounced tendency of decision-makers to advance, or attempt to advance, the opportunities of their specific states. They are forced to view the object

of their agreement without knowing the unique features of their states. Any agreement reached in the original setting is of academic interest because the simplifying conditions embodied in that setting do not impute strong motivational traits to decision-makers. Thus, one avoids the realist's objection that decision-makers are not benevolently disposed. Of course, the realist can still object. He can argue that any original setting is an abstraction from the reality of international relations, even if the simplifying assumptions apply to the conditions under which decision-makers choose rather than to assumptions about man's nature. One can reply to the realist that a conception of justice can only be generated by making certain assumptions. Can Hobbes be labelled an idealist because he stipulates conditions in the state of nature which abstract from the nature of men in organized society?

Another reason for adopting the contractarian approach is that it embodies conditions that are fair. By excluding particular knowledge, each decision-maker is placed on an equal footing with every other. No actor can tailor principles to suit the requirements of his state. In the original setting, those who turn out to be the decision-makers of Ghana have as much say as those from Russia. Why might international scholars, interested in moral perspectives, find this consequence of the contractarian approach attractive? They might find it attractive because the facts of power are divorced from the requirements of a theory of justice in international relations. No state deserves its power position because its territory sits on oil or other natural resources. Similarly, no state deserves its human talent or its state of industrial development. For these reasons no decision-makers should be placed at an advantage or disadvantage due to natural or historical accident. "Somehow," asserts Rawls,

"we must nullify the effects of specific contingencies which put men at odds and tempt them to exploit social and natural circumstances to their own advantage."[8] What characterizes the need for a theory of justice in international relations are these natural, human and historical circumstances. The idea of the original setting is fair because concrete circumstances which could affect the agreements reached in that setting carry no weight in the decision-makers deliberations.

A third reason for studying possible applications of contract theory to international relations is that it is useful as a comparative tool. Other traditional theories of justice can be analyzed in terms of the original setting. In adopting the standpoint of an original setting decision-makers can choose from a list of alternative conceptions of justice. For example, a particular structuring of the original setting could lead decision-makers to choose principles of justice that maximize the sum of advantages taken over the whole international system (utilitarianism). An alternative structuring could lead them to choose to distribute equally the goods of international society. There are many other alternatives. "As the circumstances are presented in different ways," Rawls suggests, "correspondingly different principles are accepted."[9] It is possible to compare the merits of the original setting as outlined in this chapter with alternative original settings. This is what is meant when it is said that contract theory is useful as an analytical tool.

Fourth, contract theory is of interest because principles can be derived from it. An adequate interpretation of the original setting begins

---

[8] ibid., p. 136.

[9] ibid., p. 18.

with reasonable and general assumptions and works toward an agreement on specific principles. Moral questions in international relations are usually approached inductively. That is, they begin with attention focused on specific facts and interactions and end with more general conclusions.[10] Contract theory gives us another way to view international relations moral theory. The contractarian short-cuts some of the realities of international relations to derive principles which otherwise might not surface.

B. Identification and Nature of the Contractees

In a sense, states are the contractees of international relations. They represent units that generally survive the lives of any particular persons. Yet since states do not actually make decisions, one must identify the representatives of states as the actual parties to the contract, decision-makers. This is a simplification in at least one respect. There are other human actors in interstate relations. Why not add the presidents of the major international corporations and labor executives from the major unions? Why not incorporate officials of various international organizations? Even representatives from "loyal oppositions" are active participants in the international system. The visit of a delegation of U.S. Congressmen to Cuba reflects the growing importance of non-official communications between state entities. International relations have become, in a word, transnational.[11]

---

[10] As an example, see David Mitrany, A Working Peace System (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966). For recent studies in international theory see K. J. Holsti, "Retreat from Utopia: International Relations Theory, 1945-1970," Canadian Journal of Political Science, Vol. 4, No. 2 (June, 1971).

[11] See Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, Transnational Relations and World Politics, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970).

A contract model of international relations would become inwieldy if these additional representatives were brought into play. This is not the only reason for excluding them. A strong presumption can be made that the state remains as the constituent unit of analysis in international relations. It lasts over time, it occupies a defined territory with distinct peoples and aims, and it has authoritative power over its people, and usually assigns readily identifiable decision-makers to act in its behalf. No other entity encompasses the massiveness of these requirements. This is an additional reason why decision-makers of states are to choose the principles of justice for international relations.

C. The Nature of the Choice Problem

Now that it is established as to who chooses the principles that are to guide state conduct for the future, what are the conditions under which the decision-makers choose? And how can these conditions be justified? One of the assets of Rawls' theory is that few motivational stipulations are placed on the choosers. They are not to be thought of as either being benevolent or envious. In the context of international relations, decision-makers in the original position are mutually disinterested. To repeat from the preceeding chapter, they try to maximize the opportunities of their own states without being concerned with those of other states. They may be concerned, however, with what is in the interests of third parties.[12] In other words, decision-makers of states are also choosing the principles by which trusteeship territories, international organizations, multinational corporations, and interstate unions are to be regulated. The point to be made about the mutual disinterest postulate is

---

[12] A Theory of Justice, p. 147.

that decision-makers do not try to gain at one another's expense, but to maximize their own sum of opportunities.

This neutral motivation, coupled with its consequent rationality, is not sufficient to derive principles of justice for the conduct of international relations. Decision-makers in an original setting without conditional restraints would know their states' positions in any actual international system. With this knowledge each would choose the principles which maximized what is in the interests of their own states. The decision-makers of Bangladesh would put forth principles which favored their position as would the decision-maker of Japan. Each decision-maker would opt for principles which would most likely contribute to his state's aims. A no-agreement-on-principles-plan would be the inevitable result. To nullify the effects of the advantage of particular knowledge and information, stipulations are placed on the kind of knowledge available to decision-makers and on the form of the principles themselves. These conditions are summarized under two headings: The veil of ignorance; and the formal constraints on the choice of principles.

1. The Veil of Ignorance

In the original setting, decision-makers are placed under a veil of ignorance. The parties do not know how alternative principles will affect their own states' positions. None know their state's place in international society. They do not even know which state they represent. Each is forbidden knowledge about his state's natural resources, goals and ideology. In Rawls' words, "The parties must not know the contingencies that set them in opposition."[13]

---

[13] Ibid., p. 137.

What the decision-makers do know is that each of their states is subject to the conditions of international society, as defined in the previous chapter. Consequently, they know that no state is capable of over-powering all the rest. Also, they know that each is subject to the risk-role of uncertainty and scarcity of natural resources. As well, they know the general theories of international relations and are told the general facts about the international system (but not specific proportions of rich states to poor states or any other proportion that could bias the outcome). Other facts allowed in the original setting are the laws of human psychology, structures of social organization, economic principles, and the major ideologies espoused in the present international system. "Indeed, the parties are presumed to know whatever general facts affect the choice of principles of justice."[14]

The Rawlsian "original position" is altered in two respects: First, decision-makers know that they are entering the present international system. Second, decision-makers know their own personality traits. In regard to the first alteration, Rawls does not allow persons in the original position the knowledge of which generation they belong to or the level of civilization of their generation. Knowledge of these facts could distort the kinds of principles that would be chosen. For example, if persons in the original position knew what temporal society they were to enter, they might choose unanimously to deplete all of their resources to maximize their prospects. This would be unfair to future generations. Furthermore, if they knew that the level of civilization of their society provided for most of their wants and needs, then they might choose to "go for broke"; to choose principles which maximized the prospects of the best-off in

---

[14] ibid., p. 137.

society. These constraints are unnecessary and complicate the choice of principles for international relations. Decision-makers, by virtue of their representative function, are presumed to be shaped by a role which discounts the impact of temporality. In trying to maximize what is in the national interests of their states, decision-makers in the real world think in terms which often transcend the present. As an example, former Canadian Energy Minister, Donald MacDonald, announced a gradual policy of cutting down oil exports to the U.S. for the apparent reason that there will not be enough oil to meet Canada's needs in the future if present export rates continue. Decision-makers know, in the original setting, that they are entering the present international system because this bare knowledge does not affect the choice of principles. Also, this information is congruent with the risk-role and with the motivation of decision-makers in the present international system. Since decision-makers are not choosing principles for themselves, but are choosing as representatives of their peoples, they are presumed to be concerned about the long-run welfare of their states.

The second deviation from Rawls' theory is that decision-makers are allowed the full complement of their personality traits. In Rawls, the persons in the original position are de-personalized. They do not know whether they have an aversion to risk; they do not know whether they are optimistic; and they do not know any special features of their psychology. This constraint is placed on persons because if they know their own character traits they may be able to infer their place in society. For instance, if a person is optimistic, he might be able to infer a correlation between this trait and, say, his social position in a particular society. Remember that the parties are allowed access to general social

laws. If a particular social law says that people with confidence are usually to be found in higher social positions, then it might be possible for a person with this trait to infer his position. He might take the chance of choosing principles which favor the higher social positions. By de-personalizing persons in the original position, Rawls achieves the requisite impartiality necessary for a contractarian theory of justice. But he pays a price. One of the advantages he claims for his contract theory is that it takes seriously the distinction between persons, while a utilitarian theory conflates all persons into one. By de-personalizing the contractees, that is, by taking information about their personalities away from them, Rawls does not take this distinction seriously either. It would appear that Rawls must either drop the claim that his theory takes the distinction between persons seriously or he must drop access by the contractees to general social laws. This is not a serious problem in the original setting of international relations. The role of decision-makers is significant in overcoming this problem. Decision-makers know in advance that they occupy a status position in relation to their domestic setting. They realize as well that decision-makers from other states occupy similar positions. Neither personality nor general laws of the international system need be denied to the contractees. To take a concrete example, let us imagine that Edi Amin is situated in the original setting. He would be making a grave error in judgment to infer the probability that he would turn out to be the decision-maker of a super power. Conversely, Chamberlain would be in error to infer that his state must be weak because he has a compromising personality. The personality of a decision-maker has little to do with his state's position in the international system. A decision-maker is not in a position to make any

conclusions from particular aspects of his own personality (e.g. confidence, bellicosity) because there is no established correlation between these traits and the position his state occupies in the international system. Consequently, a contractarian theory of international relations sustains the distinction between decision-makers and the distinction between states without placing knowledge of general social laws behind the veil of ignorance.

A reason for the conditional restraints on knowledge in the original setting is that these contraints are reasonable and fair. In a court case a legal system does not allow one of the parties to the case to decide the outcome. Similarly, decision-makers in the original setting are not given the information needed to arrange principles to their states' advantage. Impartiality in the original setting guarantees that no decision-maker can be sure that certain kinds of principles will be to the advantage of his state and not to others; each is forced to choose principles in the absence of more specific knowledge. Another reason for employing the veil of ignorance is that it is an ideal way to arrive at unanimous principles of justice for international relations. Given a full knowledge of the complexities of international relations and various positions of states in that system, decision-makers could not choose a set of principles unanimously. Conflicting goals, ideologies and interests would preclude agreement. If decision-makers are allowed full information in the original setting, "no definite theory at all can be worked out."[15] Of course, general agreement could be achieved by attributing to decision-makers a kind of universal benevolence or sympathy. It has been argued,

---

[15] ibid., p. 148.

however, that these stipulations on human nature are strong and are incongruous with the behavior of decision-makers. Questions of justice arise in response to the conditions of international society. It is because decision-makers of states are not benevolent and seek to advance the opportunities of their states, regardless of what is in the national interests of others, that the need for universal principles surfaces. Therefore, for reasons of fairness, simplicity, and universal agreement, the veil of ignorance is not as outlandish as it might at first appear.

2. Formal Conditions on the Choice of Principles

Even with the motivational assumptions of mutual disinterest and the veil of ignorance, decision-makers might still avoid agreement or agree to principles which they could not accept as they enter the present international system. For this reason, certain conditions are placed on the choice of principles. Following Rawls, these formal conditions include generality, universality, finality, and an ordering on conflicting claims.

Principles chosen are to be general. The decision-makers are to know in the original setting that names of states, for example, are not to be part of the content of a principle. The expression, "all are to maximize what is in the national interests of decision-maker 'A's' state," does not meet the generality requirement. Special treatment is given to a particular state when proper names of states are included.

Principles are to be universal. They are to apply to all states. A principle is eliminated if all states could not act on it. "Principles are to be chosen in view of the consequences of everyone's complying with them."[16] Generality and universality are different formal conditions.

---

[16] Ibid., p. 132.

The statement, "all are to maximize what is in the national interests of decision-maker A's state," could be universal. The consequences of all acting on the principle might be acceptable. But this expression is not general. Conversely, a principle could satisfy the generality requirement without satisfying the universal condition. The expression, All are to maximize what is in the national interests of land-locked states, is general. No particular state is singled-out for special treatment. But the expression is not universal. The consequences of all decision-makers acting on the principle might be intolerable to ocean states.

Principles chosen are to be final. Once the principles are chosen, they cannot be altered when the veil of ignorance is lifted. All conflicts over opportunities are to be settled by reference to the principles chosen in the original setting. However, the principles of justice do not require that what is in the national interests of states be absolutely sacrificed to the demands of principle. After all, in choosing the principles of justice the decision-makers try to maximize what is in the national interests of their states as best they can. Mutual disinterest and the rationality of decision-makers guarantee that the principles decision-makers select will not be incongruent with each state's ability to conform. In the original setting, decision-makers are told that if they are to derive the advantages from interstate cooperation and agreement to principles, they must be willing to adhere to their agreements, even in the event that particular opportunities are lost.

Lastly, principles must impose an order on conflicts over what is in each state's national interests. Principles of justice for international relations must order conflicting opportunities in the real

international system. Without this ordering, the expression, 'To each according to its power position,' could result. This expression is general, universal, and final. As Rawls suggests, when each actor can pursue his ends as he pleases, competing interests and claims cannot be ordered. This is the no-agreement plan: "It is what the parties would be stuck with if they were unable to reach an understanding."[17] Decision-makers in the original setting know that their states are subject to the conditions of international society. A failure to order conflicts over opportunities and the manner in which such opportunities are to be pursued is tantamount to an inability to cope with the conditions of international society in the original setting.

D. Conclusion

A suitably defined original setting in international relations should lead decision-makers to choose particular principles of justice. The conditional and formal constraints in the original setting, coupled with the knowledge of the general facts of the international system, is what is to inform the deliberations of the decision-makers. Decision-makers are placed in an original setting where they must exercise a tremendous responsibility. Each wants to maximize what is in the national interests of his state without cognizance of which state he represents. Each knows that his state has a vision of the good life which may differ from other states' conceptions. Choosing unaimouus principles for distinct states with different ideologies and dissimilar structures is not an easy task. Yet at least the original setting takes some of the arbitrariness of natural contingencies and historical fate out of the choice

---

[17] Ibid., p. 136.

situation. Principles would not be chosen if decision-makers knew their states' positions in the international system.

In the original setting ethical constraints are not imputed to the decision-makers as representatives of states but to the conditions under which they must choose. Why is the original setting of interest to international scholars? Two reasons are suggested: First, the conditional restraints embodied within it are ones that are generally acceptable from a moral point of view.[18] Second, the content of the original setting is structured to lead to particular solutions to the problem of choice.[19] If the conditional constraints are reasonable and if decision-makers would choose particular principles in the original setting, then one stands on firm ground for encouraging the development of these chosen principles. Or at least one stands on firmer ground than if these principles for the conduct of international relations were simply the product of intuition or if they were chosen on the basis of strong assumptions about the nature of men.

---

[18] ibid., p. 587.

[19] ibid., p. 141.

CHAPTER 7

The First Principle of Justice in International Relations

Introduction

The next task is to derive satisfactory principles of justice for international relations from the description of the conditions of international society and the original setting as outlined in the two previous chapters. These principles are an adaptation of Rawls' domestic principles. They are altered to meet the requirements of the international environment.

Three possible lines of criticism may be raised in regard to the discussion that follows: First, one may maintain that it is illicit to deduce principles of justice from any description of the original setting which is not based on an accurate description of the facts of the present international system. One could go further and suggest that no principles would be acceptable to all decision-makers if all of the facts were made available to them. These together are a no-solution plan. Second, one may assent to the principles expounded in these chapters, but disagree with the description offered in the original setting. This difficulty has been discussed in chapter 6. Third, one may agree with the description of the original setting and disagree with the principles adopted. It is the last criticism that is of theoretical concern to this chapter. The principles as presented in these chapters (or some reasonable variant of them) must follow from the description of the conditions of international society and the original setting. It must be shown that these are the principles that decision-makers would choose, based on the constraints

of the original setting.[1]

Decision-makers are to choose principles of justice for the basic structure of the international system. When decision-makers return to real international society these artificially chosen principles are to take precedence over any existing organizations, institutions or patterns of relationships between units.

In accordance with Rawls, one principle is needed for the assignment of rights and duties to states. Another principle is required for the distribution of goods available in the international system. In choosing principles, then, a decision-maker is concerned about the political status of the state he will eventually represent and he is concerned about his state's share in the goods of the system. These allocations are to be made in accordance with the stipulations that ensure an original fair setting. This chapter is divided into two parts: the first principle of justice and the worth of political sovereignty. In the next chapter a second principle is devised for the distribution of goods in the international system. Both principles must be accepted by decisionmakers in the original setting in order to assure justice in the real international system.

A. The First Principle

Once again imagine that the decision-makers of states are placed in an original setting where they are ignorant of the states they represent. Though familiar with contrasting views of the history of international relations, models of the international system and even generalized facts about the present system, particular facts that could bias the

---

[1] Of course, alternative constructs of the original setting could lead to the adoption of different principles. Conceivable alternatives are omitted in the text of this thesis.

outcome are closed to them. They do not know, for example, the proportion of rich states to poor states. Nor do they know the percentage of the world's population that is undernourished or starving. They are aware of the major actors in the international system. These include states, multinational corporations, and international organizations. They are also cognizant of the various purposes and functions of these units. In summary, generalized facts, models and theories are open to our fictitious decision-makers. Hidden behind the veil of ignorance are specific facts and proportions which might allow the decision-makers to calculate the odds of representing particular kinds of states. If this kind of information were admissible, the outcome could be biased and the likelihood of unanimous agreement on principles would be decreased. The ideal is to generate principles from an original setting that is fair and to no decision-maker's advantage. Decision-makers must be allowed enough information to guarantee the pursuit of opportunities in the system, but not so much as to favor the position of some of them in the original choice setting. In John Rawls' words, "Justice between states is determined by the principles that would be chosen in the original position so interpreted."[2]

It might seem reasonable to the decision-makers in the original setting to discard the distinction between a state's official, political status and its distributive status. In other words, they might choose to adopt this single principle of justice: All political statuses and opportunities are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any or all of these goods is to the advantage of each state. John Rawls

---

[2]John Rawls, A Theory of Justice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1971), p. 378.

refers to this principle as the general conception of justice.[3] This principle is unacceptable, for under this scheme, rights and duties as well as power, income, and wealth would be distributed equally unless it could be shown that an unequal distribution of any or all of these goods would be to the advantage of each state. No stipulations are placed on the types of inequality that are admissible. The only stipulation is that any inequalities must produce concrete gains for all states over their previous position of equality.

Does this principle follow from the guidelines set forth in the original setting? In the hypothetical setting, decision-makers do not know which states they represent. They do know, however that increased opportunities are instrumental in obtaining a state's ends. Also, they are aware that most states are unable to advance their ends due to insufficient opportunities. Given this context in which decision-makers must choose, an equal distribution of political status and all opportunities seems to follow. It also appears to follow that an unequal distribution of any of these goods which improves the position of all would be chosen.

Several important considerations militate against unanimous acceptance of this general conception of justice. First, decision-makers in the real world of international politics could not accept some of the consequences implied in the general conception. One of the formal conditions placed on the choice of principles is that whatever is chosen in the original setting is final. No alteration of choice is possible, once the decision-makers know the facts about their states. An unacceptable

---

[3] ibid., p, 62.

SOME FAINT LETTERS

consequence of the general conception is that it legitimizes the possibility of an unequal political status between states. If each state's position in the international system can be improved upon (as measured by some index of total goods) by guaranteeing a less than equal political status to some or even most states, then the principle requires that this be done. For example, the general conception could justify an unequal legal, political status between Chad and Algeria if the former state receives more of what is in its national interests under this scheme than it would under conditions of political equality. Chad might, in fact, become totally subservient to the political will of Algeria. But decision-makers in the original setting are jealous of their right to make authoritative policy decisions in behalf of their states. The general conception can undermine a decision-maker's role. A less than equal political status simply confirms an aspect of international reality that is unacceptable from the vantage point of the original setting. It is unacceptable because one of the reasons the decision-makers enter into the original setting is to resolve once and for all some of the uncertainties of the real world. These include the possibilities of external interference and penetration into the decision-making processes of states.

A second consideration that might disturb decision-makers in the original setting in regard to the general conception is the following: How can it be shown that an unequal distribution of political status or, for that matter, any other good improves each state's position in the international system? One could argue that a lesser political status for some states advances the opportunities of all states to improve their positions. One could compare an equal distribution of political status with an unequal one and decide which distribution would add more to the

SOME FAINT LETTERS

total goods of each state. Note, however, that this comparison could not show that each state's position is improved. It would merely indicate that a particular distribution increases each state's opportunities to better its position. There is no direct correlation between advancing the opportunities of each state and bettering the position of each state. Similarly, there is no absolute correlation between a state's capabilities and its ability to influence other states.[4] For example, though the Soviet Union has vast resources and capabilities, it has been unable to control the foreign policy conduct of Yugoslavia. Why ought decision-makers reason that a less than equal distribution of political status will improve each of their state positions, given the tenuous connection between what is in a state's national interests and state improvement? Taking such a risk would be irrational on the part of decision-makers in the original setting since an improvement in each state's position cannot be guaranteed.

A third consideration that decision-makers might scrutinize is the question of whether the general conception undermines the very notion of separate and distinct state entities. After all, the authors of the United Nations Charter were, amongst other things, adamant in their support for the equal rights of states and their "sovereign equality".[5] A less than equal political status for some states could have the unwanted consequence of legislating a permanently inferior political role for the decision-makers of these states. Perhaps political status is the kind of

---

[4] See, for example, K. J. Holsti, International Politics, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), p. 159.

[5] Joel Larus, ed., From Collective Security to Preventive Diplomacy (N.Y.: John Wiley and Sons, 1965), p. 532. This is article 2, section 2, of the U.N. Charter.

SOME FAINT LETTERS

good that cannot be traded away for other goods without subverting the very purpose of those other goods. An independent source of decision-making is often cited as a criterion for the existence of a state. If political autonomy is relegated to a secondary status, then what is in the national interests of politically subservient states would no longer be national. What would the Monroe Doctrine mean if the United States were not politically sovereign? Even the opportunities gained through membership in the E.E.C. or O.P.E.C. are passed on to the constituent members. Political sovereignty, it seems, is a necessary condition for the pursuit of what is in a state's national interests even when opportunities are sought within the context of trans-national organizations. The term interest is central to the field of international relations because it always refers back to the opportunities of particular states to improve their positions in the international system. By raising the possibility of an unequal distribution of political status, the general conception of justice has the possible consequence of obliterating the distinction between states, a consequence that decision-makers can hardly accept from the vantage point of the original setting.

In summation, the general conception of justice, as opposed to the two principles which are presented in this and the following chapter, is not acceptable to decision-makers in the original setting for three reasons: It raises the possibility of an unequal distribution of political status (which is unacceptable to decision-makers); it cannot guarantee that each state's position will be improved by an unequal distribution; and it has the unacceptable consequence of obliterating the distinction between state-entities. What was asserted in the introduction to this chapter now, at least, has some justification: One principle is required

SOME FAINT LETTERS

for the assignment of political status to states; a second principle is required which sets out a procedure for the distribution of state opportunities.

The first principle of justice is the following: Each state is to be guaranteed political sovereignty, consistent with a like political sovereignty for all other states. An acceptable argument for the principle must meet two conditions: First, the principle must follow from the constraints of the original setting. Second, the principle of political sovereignty must be compatible with the possibility of its realization in the present international system.

Before proceeding to a discussion of these conditions, it is necessary to elucidate the meaning of political sovereignty. The term is meant to guarantee the same political status for all states. Under the principle, each state would be (1) free to establish political and trade relations with other states as it sees fit and (2) each would be free from external interference. The first part of the principle allows states to merge into other units as long as this is consistent with the second part of the principle.

Since decision-makers in the original setting are aware that their states are subject to the conditions of international society, there is no need to incorporate "peace" principles into the statement of the first principle. As John Rawls submits, "It is to avoid the appeal to force and cunning that the principles of right and justice are accepted."[6] As a result of the first principle the need to engage in military conflict has disappeared. States can maintain all other normal activities as long

---

[6]Rawls, A Theory of Justice, p. 134.

SOME FAINT LETTERS

as these are consistent with the second part of the principle. The role of a theory of justice in international relations is to assign a political status to each state and to determine a procedure for the just distribution and pursuit of opportunities. It is not a task of justice to develop a procedure for the pacific settlement of disputes and conflicts, important as this may be as a condition for a just international system. It is expected that once the principles are accepted, institutions will be required to resolve particular disputes not foreseen in the original setting. Also, it will be necessary to enforce the non-interference clause of the first principle against states which refuse to abide by what they agreed to in the original setting.

Would the general principle of political sovereignty be acceptable to decision-makers in the original setting, based on the motivations of decision-makers and the constraints of that setting? Decision-makers know that as representatives of their states they are responsible for maintaining and increasing the opportunities of their states. These opportunities contribute to a state's chances of realizing a better position in the international system. Ultimately, acts and policies which are in the national interests of a state are instrumental in determining whether a state can realize its ends, its conception of well-being, and its idea of the good life. In addition, decision-makers are aware of the risk-role of states.[7] They know that the international environment is plagued with uncertainty; and that obtaining increased opportunities

---

[7] David Singer, "Inter-Nation Influence: A Formal Model," in James Rosenau ed., International Politics and Foreign Policy, revised ed. (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1969), p. 386. "A perusal of recent diplomatic history strongly suggests that most nations are remarkably conservative in foreign policy; i.e. they seldom commit resources and prestige to the pursuit of an outcome which seems improbable..."

SOME FAINT LETTERS

in this kind of environment depends on the disposition, in many instances, of other states. Furthermore, decision-makers are aware that their states are not self-sufficient. They must trade to obtain the goods which are scarce within their own states.

These facts may lead decision-makers in the original setting to reason together in the following way: As decision-makers, we are responsible for increasing the opportunities of our several states. This is a difficult task since we are not familiar with the capabilities, circumstances, and requirements of each of our states. As well, we know that each of our states is subject to the risk-role and to the conditions of international society. Two pervasive, seemingly contradictory, trends dominate the structure of the present international system, we are told: One is towards political unification; the other is towards political struggles and nationalism. No authoritative, legitimate institutions exist which could order the conflicting claims of the units and subunits in the international system. It seems reasonable, therefore, to guarantee once and for all political sovereignty to each state. After all, any one of our states may turn out to be involved in political struggle or may be too weak to resist external political domination. Political sovereignty would at least guarantee a final agreement to respect the independent rights of states, powerful or weak. As decision-makers, it is our duty to adopt a principle which offers the best chance to each of our states to better their positions in the international system and to ensure the well-being of our people. The best way to do this, given the minimal knowledge available to us in the original setting, is to establish political sovereignty as our first principle of justice.

The decision-makers have reasoned intuitively to the first principle

SOME FAINT LETTERS

of justice for international relations. It would seem reasonable for them to accept the two following claims: First, that political sovereignty is a necessary condition for a state to pursue any increased opportunities which are in its interests. Second, that only increased opportunities allow a state to gain over its previous position in the international system. If these claims are acceptable to them, then it follows that political sovereignty is a necessary condition for a state to gain over its previous position in the international system. Whether decision-makers in the original setting can accept the truth of the first claim depends upon the knowledge available to them in this setting. This knowledge includes these facts: 1. Decisicn-makers are fully responsible for the well-being of their people; 2. A less than equal political status for some states means that some decision-makers could not be fully responsible for the well-being of their people; 3. The results of acts and policies which are in the national interests of states can only benefit the state or states in possession of them. To the extent that these statements are reasonable to the decision-makers in the original setting, the principle of political sovereignty will likewise be reasonable.

The second claim, that only those acts that are in the national interests of states provide opportunities for a state to gain over its previous position in the international system, is a restatement of the meaning of what is in a state's national interests. Decision-makers are told that increased opportunities are central to the development of a state's position in the international system. They know that in the real world of international relations the dynamic inter-play between increased opportunities and gaining better positions is the characteristic trait of interaction in that sphere of activity.

SOME FAINT LETTERS

However, even if the principle of political sovereignty can be inferred from what the decision-makers are able to discern in the original setting, is it compatible with what is possible in the present international system? That is, could decision-makers abide by the first principle when they return to their states and are given the relevant information about their states? An autonomous international system, composed of independent political units, is not a new idea in international relations. The balance of power system relies, to a certain extent, upon a network of independent states. The idea is expressed in the United Nations Charter as well. Failure to realize political sovereignty in the international system can be traced to two interrelated circumstances: First, one can maintain that the international system has not reached the point where clear lines can be demarcated between units. Second, it can be argued that historically, at least, the pursuit of increased opportunities by a few states has interfered with the realization of political sovereignty in other units.

In regard to the first circumstance, international relations in the past one-hundred years has been affected significantly by the influence of nationalism. In the present international system nationalism is still a central feature. People throughout the world are still attempting to weld themselves together into political units. How are developing entities, then, to be accommodated through the principle of political sovereignty?

It can be said that decision-makers in the present international system could abide by the requirement of not interfering in the internal affairs of developing units. The second part of the political sovereignty principle, political non-interference, is compatible with the present

SOME FAINT LETTERS

realities of the international system, even though some states would be required to forego opportunities which could be derived from political interference. Though concerned about the ultimate shape of the political units in South East Asia, both The People's Republic of China and the United States are capable of maintaining an agreement not to penetrate the political processes of developing Asian states.

What must be shown is that the principle of political sovereignty is compatible with newly established political units. Only decision-makers of states enter into the original setting. A procedure must be articulated for the fair representation of future political units. Even the present international system has a mechanism (through the United Nations) for dealing with trusteeships and territories. An acceptable way of accounting for stateless territories and developing political units is implicit in the political sovereignty principle. A neutral political status is to be guaranteed to developing units. The requirement of political non-interference by the established states guarantees this status. Though mutually-disinterested in each other's well-being in the original setting, decision-makers would be concerned with what Rawls refers to as third parties,[8] i.e. entities which become part of the system after the "original setting" such as Angola, Namibia, or Transkei. Their concern about territories and future state entities stems from their regard for the future structure of the international system. Only by extending the political sovereignty principle to future states can the hypothetical decision-makers ensure the finality, universality, and generality of this principle. From the point of view of future decision-makers

---

[8] Rawls, A Theory of Justice, p. 147.

SOME FAINT LETTERS

political sovereignty would also be chosen. This is the only principle that can guarantee their future independent right to make authoritative decisions on behalf of their people. Thus, the future leaders of territories are to be regarded in the same way as the future leaders of established states. Decision-makers in the original setting may be seen as the guardians of political sovereignty, protecting the rights of developing as well as established state units. Because the political sovereignty principle is not static, it provides for the development of future politically autonomous units. Still, while ensuring the above the principle does not account for the distribution of goods, thus worth becomes an apparent issue.

B. The Worth of Political Sovereignty

The worth of political sovereignty is dependent upon a state's power, resources, wealth, and the responsiveness of other states to that state. A guarantee of the same political status to all states does not in itself secure the worth of this status. For example, though Sierra Leone and Egypt share an official, equal status in the General Assembly, it cannot be maintained that the worth of this status is the same for each state. Similarly, the worth of the right to vote for the Metis in Canada must be balanced against the economic status and social conditions of these peoples.

Political sovereignty must not be construed as being in the national interests of states, even if it is accepted as a necessary condition for the pursuit of increased opportunities. What is in the national interests of states always contributes to their potential to gain over their previous positions in the international system. Guarantees of political sovereignty do not contribute to the potential for a state to gain

SOME FAINT LETTERS

over its previous position. In the game of Monopoly all players start at "Go". However, as a procedural rule of the game, starting at "Go" does not contribute to the opportunities of any player. Similarly, Rawls' first principle guarantees equal liberty to persons in the original position. It does not guarantee the worth of that liberty, though it is clear that equal liberty is a condition for the realization of Rawls' most important primary good, self-respect.[9]

Without political sovereignty an independent decision-making apparatus cannot be identified. Yet the worth of political sovereignty must be related in some way to a state's chances of gaining opportunities. After all, decision-makers in the original setting know that they must gain opportunities for their states if their states are to obtain better positions in the international system. Guaranteeing an equal political status does not at the same time secure equal chances for all states to pursue increased opportunities. The worth of political sovereignty could not be the same for Canada and Bangladesh. Canada has the natural resources, wealth, and technical expertise to gain the opportunities necessary to better its position in the international system. Bangladesh does not have such a capacity. Since decision-makers in the original setting reason that states do not deserve positions which have been attained by historical circumstances and the natural distribution of resources, a second principle is required to insure the worth of political sovereignty. In a just international structure, political sovereignty is a necessary condition for the pursuit of increased opportunities, though it is not sufficient. It is for this reason that a procedural principle is required for the distribution of goods in the international system.

---

[9] Ibid., p. 396.

SOME FAINT LETTERS

CHAPTER 8

The Second Principle of Justice in International Relations

Introduction

Each state in the international system can be distinguished in terms of two statuses: by reference to political sovereignty and by reference to its place in the distribution of opportunities. The political sovereignty principle establishes the right of each state to develop political and trade relations and the right of each one to political non-interference. A second principle of justice is required to guarantee that future inequalities increase the opportunities of the least advantaged group of states to better their positions in the international system.

In the original setting, decision-makers are aware of the gross inequalities between states. Though unfamiliar with proportions of rich to poor, they know that some states have the means to fulfill many ends while many others are virtually blocked in the attainment of any of their aims. From this vantage point, a decision-maker does not know what his state's aims are but he does recognize that increased opportunities are necessary means to the realization of most ends, especially those that place states in better positions in the international system.[1] Increasing the opportunities of disadvantaged states does not in itself assure to

---

[1] John Rawls, A Theory of Justice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1971), p. 144. Since the benefits to be derived from increased opportunities devolve on the states in possession of them, they cannot directly contribute to community oriented goals such as peace or justice.

SOME FAINT LETTERS

recipient states that they will gain better positions in relation to previous positions in the system. Obtaining ends is dependent upon how a state uses its opportunities and upon what those ends are.[2] Yet, without access to means such as wealth, power, and other suitably generalized opportunities, it is impossible for a state to improve its position. Thus, the second principle addresses a central issue of distribution in international society: How to guarantee that future inequalities increase the opportunities of the disadvantaged group of states to better their positions in the international system.

A. The Second Principle

John Rawls refers to this distributive procedure as the difference principle.[3] The principle is biased in favor of the least advantaged states. Those states that benefit from any current distribution of opportunities in international relations are, in the future, allowed to gain opportunities only in terms that improve the prospects of the least fortunate states.

From a moral point of view, support for the difference principle rests on the following argument: If one expects cooperative trade relations and political non-interference in the relations between states, then the structure of international society must be based on a principle which improves the chances of all states to better their positions in the

---

[2] ibid., p. 94.

[3] ibid., pp. 152-158. See also, John Rawls, "Some Reasons for the Maximin Criterion," American Economic Review, vol. 64 (May, 1974), p. 142. Rawls revised the second principle to read "greatest expected benefit" rather than "greatest benefit". See p. 302, A Theory of Justice, for the original formulation. This revised formulation is more consistent with the meaning of what is in a state's national interests since the latter do not provide benefits but are opportunities to gain benefits.

SOME FAINT LETTERS

international system. Otherwise, many states would be permanently unable to improve their prospects due to the concentrations of natural resources and industrial strength in a few favored states. However, favored states do not necessarily deserve these assets. At the same time, one could not expect the presently most-favored states to comply with a principle of distribution that divided all of the assets of international society equally between all states. Therefore, logically, the proper principle of distribution to apply is Rawls' difference principle. Future inequalities in the distribution of opportunities must increase the opportunities of the disadvantaged states.

Under this principle, a state that is well-off is only allowed to gain opportunities in trade relations with disadvantaged states under conditions which increase the opportunities of the disadvantaged state. For example, United States multinational corporations would be allowed, by the principle, to extract and export tin from Bolivia as long as the opportunities to be derived from the joint venture produce opportunities for Bolivia to improve its position in the international system. Presumably, such increases could usually be measured in terms of economic opportunities. To meet this requirement of the principle, advanced states, for example, are required to forego opportunities through trade, foreign aid and international pricing of commodities which are not expected to produce opportunities to the least advantaged states. Inequalities in the distribution of opportunities are allowed because such inequalities increase the opportunities of disadvantaged states more than if such inequalities were not allowed.

Given the constraints of the original setting, what arguments can be made in favor of this idea of the difference principle? John Rawls

adopts a maximin strategy in his argument for this principle.[4] The maximin decision rule directs a decision-maker to the worst possible outcome in cases of uncertainty. He is to choose the principle that maximizes the opportunities of the minimum position, assuming that this may be the position his state occupies. If it is rational for decision-makers to opt for the maximin strategy in the original setting, the difference principle or some variant of it clearly follows. And a case can be made in behalf of the maximin strategy for decision-makers in the original setting.

In the first place, decision-makers are subject to the risk-role of states. They know that in the real world of international relations states cannot be certain of gaining opportunities and no state is self-sufficient. The risk-role of states is a general fact, thus qualifying it as part of the information available to the decision-makers. Though individuals representing themselves can choose to gamble on a "go for broke" strategy (buying a lottery ticket?) or select a principle that maximizes average utility (where some might get left out), a representative of a state can hardly gamble the same way with what is in his state's national interests. This is especially true when decision-makers are ignorant of which states they represent. However, they do know that states normally pursue a conservative strategy in their mutual relations. It is usually not worth taking the chance to commit resources to desirable, but unlikely, outcomes. With the exception of the military expedition into Poland in 1920, not even Lenin thought that Soviet military capabilities should be employed to achieve the ultimate socialist international society.

---

[4] Rawls, A Theory of Justice, ibid.

SOME FAINT LETTERS

Furtherance of state opportunities is seldom accomplished by pursuing risky politics. Awareness of the risk-role, then, tends to constrain any risk-oriented decision-makers in the original setting.

Second, the inability of decision-makers to project or forecast probabilities leads to the choice of a maximin strategy. In the original setting, decision-makers are ignorant of the likelihood of representing different types of states. They know that there are rich states and poor states, but they do not know specific proportions. Not knowing his state's position in the international system, each is forced to consider himself as representative of the least fortunate group. A decision-maker is not similarly motivated to consider himself as a member of the most fortunate group of states due to his inability to forecast probabilities. If a decision-maker turns out to be representative of one of the well-off states very little is lost in relation to what would be lost if all decision-makers were to choose a distributive principle on the basis of representing the most well-off group of states. As an analogy, if one takes out fire insurance on a house and the house does not burn down, the monetary sacrifices for the insurance are low. But if one does not take out fire insurance and the house burns down, a great financial loss results. And how can one assess the likelihood of a particular house burning down this year? A willingness to adopt the maximin strategy for choice under conditions of uncertainty is definitely an agreement to take out insurance against the most undesirable consequences.

A third consideration that favors a choice of conservative strategy stems from the very nature of the contract situation. What is decided upon in the original setting is to govern the future relations between states. The principles agreed to are final and are, therefore, not to be

SOME FAINT LETTERS

adjusted to the configuration of power relationships in the present international system. Thus, what Rawls refers to as the strains of commitment leads to the maximin strategy and the difference principle.[5] States in the present international system must be able to adjust their relationships to what the principles of justice require. This means that the second principle must be neither so weak as to justify insufficient allotments of opportunities to disadvantaged states nor so strong as to require equal shares of opportunities to all states. In either case, compliance becomes intolerable for some group of states. The difference principle regulates, rather than disqualifies, inequalities in the structure of the international system. It regulates them by requiring that future political and trade relations involving distributive inequalities increase the opportunities of the least fortunate group of states.

Selection of the difference principle is ultimately based on the idea that all states will in some way benefit from it. The requirement that future inequalities increase the opportunities of the least-advantaged states works to the benefit of all states in relation to what might be required by a utilitarian distributive principle.

Since the choice of a distributive procedure in the original setting affects the future prospects of any state to realize its conception of the good life, national decision-makers must ask the following questions: Is it reasonable to divide the opportunities of states equally (assuming that states could accept this in the real international system) if all can gain even more opportunities and, consequently, better positions in the international system as a result of an unequal distribution? And if the

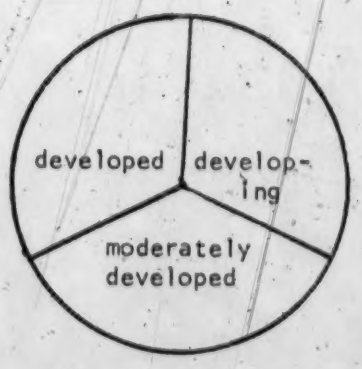
---

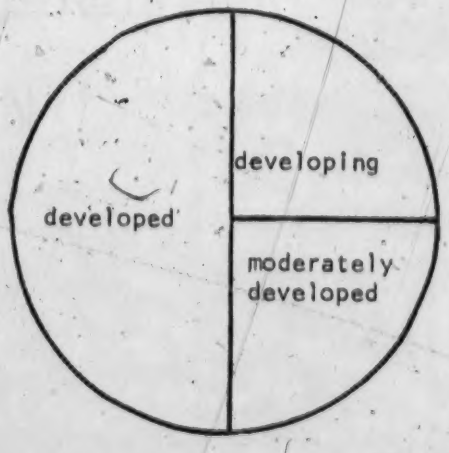
[5] Rawls, "Some Reasons for the Maximin Criterion," American Economic Review, Vol. 64 (May, 1974), p. 156.

SOME FAINT LETTERS

answer to the first question is negative, then under what conditions are inequalities in the structure of international society acceptable?

An equal distribution of all opportunities for gain seems on the surface to be a "focal-point" solution.[6] It would appear that no decision-maker in the original setting would accept less and none could expect more. However, consider the following two distributions of opportunities:[7] In the first distribution, amounts are allocated equally between each group of states. In the second, amounts are allocated unequally but each group has more than it would under the first distribution. For each to have more, the second distribution must involve an amount larger than the first. This is not an unlikely assumption since the developed group of states are given incentives (due to the allowable inequalities under the difference principle) to increase their opportunities through trade with other states, including disadvantaged states.





[6] Thomas Schelling, The Strategy of Conflict (N.Y.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), p. 111.

[7] See Nicholas Rescher, Distributive Justice (N.Y.: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1966), p. 91.

SOME FAINT LETTERS

Clearly, the second distribution is preferable to the first even though it is not nearly as equal. It is preferable because each state's opportunities are increased in relation to the first distribution. The distribution is acceptable to decision-makers in the original setting because they are not concerned with their relative positions vis-a-vis one another, but are solely concerned with increasing their opportunities to gain over their own previous positions in the international system. Thus, the idea behind the difference principle is to increase the opportunities of all states.

The condition for the acceptance of inequalities in the international structure is that the wealthy, industrialized states are only allowed to benefit from their fortunate circumstances on terms that improve the prospects of the disadvantaged states. "If there are inequalities in the basis structure that work to make everyone better off in comparison with the benchmark of initial equality, why not permit them?", Rawls asks.[8] Indeed, why not? It is mandatory that decision-makers choose the distributive principle which tends to give them the most opportunities, assuming that they take the vantage point of the worst-off group of states in the system. The difference principle appears to guarantee this by stipulating the conditions under which future inequalities will be allowed. Inequalities of distribution must always increase the opportunities of the least-advantaged group of states more than if no inequalities were allowed.

A final argument in favor of the maximin strategy and the difference principle is perhaps the most decisive one. Decision-makers in the

---

[8] Rawls, A Theory of Justice, p. 151.

SOME FAINT LETTERS

original setting know that the political sovereignty principle, establishing an equal, official status, is worth very little unless a state has the means to better its position in the international system. It is not enough to insure the security of political survival to states; they must be able to do more than merely survive in the international environment if they are to realize their conceptions of well-being. At the same time, states are autonomous units which cannot recognize the propriety of regarding the assets of the international system as collective.[9] General facts and the course of international history are each open to the fictitious decision-makers. Thus, they are aware of the inequities in trade, foreign aid transfers, capital borrowing, and in diplomatic bargaining. They are also aware of the lack of sympathy between state actors. It should, therefore, seem obvious to them that international society is not a welfare community. Given these conditions of international life, the difference principle seems to be the most appropriate distributive procedure because it guarantees economic opportunities to states. It is assumed that these types of opportunities correlate with bargaining power, prestige, and other suitably generalized means which lead to better positions in the international system.[10]

Several reasons support adoption of the difference principle in the original setting: the risk-role of states and the concommitant responsibility of decision-makers to choose a conservative distributive strategy; the inability of decision-makers to forecast likelihoods; the

---

[9] Compare with John Rawls, A Theory of Justice, p. 179. Rawls thinks that the assets in a domestic community can be regarded as collective.

[10] Rawls, A Theory of Justice, p. 97. Rawls also assumes a correlation between economic primary goods and other primary goods.

SOME FAINT LETTERS

finality of the contract in determining future relations between states; the fact that decision-makers would not choose a principle without expecting benefits from it; and the general role the difference principle plays in guaranteeing the worth of political sovereignty. In the next section a short comparison is offered between the difference principle and a utilitarian principle of distribution.

B. The Difference Principle and Utilitarianism

A utilitarian distributive principle requires that the greatest good of a total community be maximized. Thus, under utilitarianism, the existence of a community is implied. Acceptance of a specific average utility criterion also implies the following: that what is in the national interests of some states might have to be sacrificed for the greater good of others; and that inter-state comparisons of good can be arrived at.

International society is composed of distinct states which attach supreme importance to obtaining and maintaining their opportunities. Unlike domestic societies, there is no sovereign to order the interests of states according to law. The significance of this fact is that a utilitarian concept of distribution, which implies the existeice of an international community, lacks the conditions for implementation. Conversely, acceptance of the difference principle is based on a contract between decision-makers who know that there is no pre-existing community to distribute goods legally.

Even if there is some degree of benevolence in the present international system, an assumption some utilitarians might make, donor states as well as recipient states are often frustrated by political complexities

and governmental red-tape. How is the decision-making apparatus to distribute these goods efficiently and with dispatch under utilitarianism? For example, Canadian gifts of grain to India are hampered by labor strikes, railroad derailments, shipping costs, landowner resistance in India and other logistical difficulties. A utilitarian distributive scheme is too dependent upon the good-will of states in overcoming these difficulties. In contrast, the difference principle is rooted in an original agreement whereby the participants are obliged to carry out what they agreed to in the original setting.

Also, in a utilitarian distributive scheme, there is always the possibility that some states may be left out. A utilitarian criterion of distribution for international society might very well maximize what is in the national interests of the industrialized states since the total amount of opportunities in the system might thereby be maximized. An efficient distribution might outweigh a fairer one. It is even possible that some developing countries would become permanently exploited under this conception. If the greatest good of the greatest number of states is maximized by leaving out some of the states with the greatest amount of problems (such as India), it is conceivable that the utilitarian principle could legitimize such oversights. It is possible that other developing states would be permanently exploited for the greater benefit of most of the others. In contrast, the difference principle takes into account all of the disadvantaged states. Given the facts of an atomistic international society, it is difficult to see how decision-makers in the original setting could risk these contingently possible consequences of utilitarianism.

Even if all of the facts of international society are made available

to decision-makers in the original setting, it is still unlikely that a principle of utility would be accepted. Ideally, a utilitarian distribution maximizes benefits and minimizes burdens. To do this at the international level requires inter-state comparisons of state satisfaction. The problem is that what is considered to be the "good life" in Japan and in China are far different. One cannot (at least in the international system) measure satisfaction levels and distribute accordingly. It is for this reason that a utilitarian calculus involves measuring difficulties which cannot be resolved in or out of the original setting.

The contract model assumes that all states want increased opportunities since these are the necessary means for states to develop better positions in the international system. A utilitarian distributive principle would not distribute the means to state satisfaction (what are in states' national interests), but satisfaction itself. To maximize the total expected satisfaction carried over all states, a utilitarian is forced to calculate the worth of each state's concept of well-being. Would feeding people in Ethiopia count for more, per capita, than introducing a national health scheme in the United States? If so, by what criteria? The difference principle is simpler in that it only requires that inequalities contribute to the opportunities of the least advantaged group of states. It simplifies by referring solely to the general category of opportunity whereas a utilitarian principle must be applied in accordance with the objectives, goals and desires of particular states. The utilitarian undermines impartiality in order to maximize the total expected benefits in international society. And to maximize satisfaction the utilitarian cannot avoid the problem of making inter-state comparisons of utility, based on the disparate ideas of well-being which different

SOME FAINT LETTERS

states espouse. Conversely, acceptance of the difference principle simplifies the complexities of international life by holding that it is an impossible task to measure satisfaction levels of the several states anyway and that even if cardinal judgments could be made the results might be unacceptable to certain representative groups of states (i.e. the disadvantaged or well-off).

The argument against applying a utilitarian distributive principle rests on the following points: that it implies the existence of an international community; that what is in the national interests of some states might have to be sacrificed for the greater good of most states; that inter-state comparisons of state satisfactions cannot be measured; and that decision-makers in the original setting would not be prepared to take the risks of unacceptable consequences which might result from the principle.

C. Priority of the First Principle

Two principles of international justice have been presented in this and the preceeding chapter: the principle of political sovereignty and the difference principle. Arguments have been made to show how these principles follow from the artificially constructed original setting. Because political sovereignty is a condition for the pursuit of any opportunities, the first principle has priority over the difference principle in cases of conflict between them. Similarly, Rawls' first principle of equal liberty must be satisfied before the second principle comes into play in what he refers to as the special conception of justice.[11]

---

[11] Rawls, A Theory of Justice, pp. 541-548.

In Rawls' special scheme, the conditions of society are such that equal liberties between free persons can be effectively realized and are more important to the agents than incremental increases in economic or other material opportunities. In the general conception, men relinquish part of their political liberties when the economic returns and long-run benefits are significant enough to transform a less fortunate community into one where the political liberties can be exercised.[12] Rawls notes:

> The denial of equal liberty can be accepted only if it is necessary to enhance the quality of civilization so that in due course the equal freedoms can be enjoyed ... As the conditions of civilization improve, the marginal significance for our good of further economic or social advantages diminishes relative to the interests of liberty...[13]

The general conception allows trade-offs between political liberties and material opportunities, whereas, the special conception disallows these trade-offs. The value of liberty, in either formulation, is dependent upon circumstance.[14]

A theory of justice in international relations must similarly rank political sovereignty ahead of the difference principle. Without political sovereignty an entity can not claim to be a state. Political sovereignty, as noted in the last chapter, is a condition for a state to pursue what is in its national interests. However, the worth of political sovereignty is jeopardized when a state is unable to obtain the opportunities necessary to advance its most wanted ends. Thus, though the political sovereignty principle is prior to the difference principle, it

---

[12] ibid., p. 63, p. 247.
[13] ibid., p. 542.
[14] ibid., p. 247.

SOME FAINT LETTERS

is not more important. Both principles must be satisfied before the relations between states could be considered to be just.

Political sovereignty is an absolute in international relations; an entity either has it or it does not.[15] If it has political sovereignty it is a state. For decision-makers in the original setting to opt for the general conception of justice, where there is no ordering of principles, the idea of trading off political sovereignty for generalized opportunities would have to make sense. But this idea would only be reasonable if a state could be identified apart from its most distinguishing feature, an independent decision-making body. However, a state can not be identified in this manner. To give up political sovereignty is to give up being a state. Though an individual does not cease to exist by bartering away some of his liberties for economic opportunities, a state's existence does terminate without autonomous decision-makers. By setting the political sovereignty principle ahead of the difference principle, decision-makers in the original setting protect their right to make decisions for their respective states. The priority rule guarantees statehood. Once the decision-makers know which states they represent it could make sense for some of them to trade away statehood for economic opportunities for their peoples. The first part of the political sovereignty principle establishes the right of decision-

---

[15] In contrast, for Rawls the means of providing liberty are apparently fixed. An increase in one person's liberty decreases someone else's. Beyond some point further increases in an individual's liberty stifles the full realization of liberty for others. As I have defined political sovereignty it would not make sense to say that one state has more sovereignty than another. See A Theory of Justice, p. 546. For an excellent discussion of this issue see Henry Shue, "Liberty and Self-Respect," Ethics, vol. 85 (April, 1975), p. 200.

SOME FAINT LETTERS

makers to establish and do the following: to develop political and trade relations as they see fit. For example, states are allowed to integrate or amalgamate. However, by doing so, they give up political sovereignty for benefits to their people; they do not give up political sovereignty for increased opportunities for their states.

SOME FAINT LETTERS

CHAPTER 9

Conclusions

If decision-makers agree to the two principles in the original setting, then they implicitly agree to the institutions that would be required to interpret and enforce the intent of the principles. The primary task of a contractarian approach to justice in international relations is to devise the best possible principles for the regulation of international society. It is a secondary task to determine the institutions which would be required to interpret and enforce these principles. Institutions cannot be determined until the principles are accepted.

Decision-makers cannot rely solely on the binding force of the original agreement. They must be given assurance that all states will adhere to the agreement. It is at this juncture that interpretive and enforcement agencies will be required to uphold the principles of justice. States do not share the kind of confidence that would be required to render these institutions superfluous.

Though such institutions would be necessary to coerce recalcitrant states to abide by what they agreed to in the original setting, such institutions in any just society are ancilliary to other reasons for obedience. In the case of international society, two reasons are suggested. First, through commitment to the principles, states can gain more opportunities than by reverting back to the conditions of international society. In other words, the overall advantages to be derived from compliance outweigh the advantages of non-compliance. Second, the burden of commitment to the principles is not too heavy for any state.

SOME FAINT LETTERS

Since the risk-role of states is a predominant feature of the present international system, compliance with the first principle outweighs immediate disadvantages. The duty not to interfere in the internal affairs of states benefits both the advantaged and the disadvantaged states. Though the U.S. would no longer be allowed to support certain elements in developing states against their regimes, as in Chile, it would gain the immeasurable benefit of reducing defense spending. Similar benefits would accrue to other states which presently find it necessary to maintain defense budgets for security purposes. At the same time, disadvantaged states would be freed from unwanted external military and economic penetration. What the political sovereignty principle establishes is the right of states to invest their funds in domestic projects and international opportunities unimpeded by security dilemmas and external penetration.

An additional benefit of the political sovereignty principle is that it allows states to develop relations with other states as they see fit, consistent with the duty of political non-interference. An attractive consequence of this aspect of the principle is that states would be free to trade, form cartels or integrate with states presently closed to them. For example, Western Europe might develop extensive political and economic links with Eastern Europe, an impossibility without something like the political sovereignty principle. This aspect of the principle might place strains on the Soviet Union in regard to its favored-nation status vis-a-vis Eastern Europe, but the benefits to be derived from a de-militarized Europe would work in favor of Soviet commitment to the principle.

Is the burden of commitment to the first principle excessive?

SOME FAINT LETTERS

There is little or no burden for established, but disadvantaged, states. The only states to be significantly affected adversely are those states which are presently gaining opportunities at the expense of disadvantaged states. In many of these cases it is questionable as to whether the opportunities gained really benefit the states pursuing them. For example, do U.S. policies which sustain the favored positions of multi-national corporations in South America benefit the U.S. in terms of increased G.N.P. or do they for the most part benefit the multi-nationals in terms of profit? If the answer to this question is the latter, then the burden of commitment for these companies may be high but this does not show that U.S. burdens would be excessive. In fact, the possible losses sustained in decreased G.N.P. would be far outweighed by reduced defense spending.

Where the burden of commitment to the first principle is most severely tested is in regard to conflicts over territorial boundaries between established states and civil strife within developing or established entities. Surely the principle must be viable in regard to these world problems. How does it apply to disputed territory between China and the Soviet Union? How is it applicable to some of the artificially created states in Africa, especially those whose boundaries cut across warring factions? Obviously, if the principle is to settle these difficult cases, it must be supported by enforcement institutions and an international body to interpret what the principle requires. In these cases the principle cannot always rely on states to choose the long-run advantages of compliance. In disputes between established states, the principle only tells states to observe the political non-interference clause; it does not tell them where boundaries should be drawn over

SOME FAINT LETTERS

disputed territory. Of course, no procedural principle can adequately deal with specific problems of this sort. It is for this reason that it does not count against the political sovereignty principle merely because interpretive institutions would be required to insure speedy resolution of particular disputes. Similarly, it does not count against the fourteenth amendment to the U.S. Constitution that Congress provided for the power to enforce the provisions of this amendment through appropriate legislation.

In cases involving strife in quasi-state entities, the political sovereignty principle makes it abundantly clear as to what is required of established states: they are to observe the duty of political non-interference. But the principle does not tell warring and conflicting parties in developing states or quasi-state entities what to do. Again, institutions are required to make judgments regarding cases such as Cyprus or Angola. Should the parties in conflict be allowed to fight it out? Should international institutions rule these areas until compromises can be reached between factions? There are no self-evident answers to these questions.

The strength of the political sovereignty principle is to be found in its general procedural orientation. To apply the principle to hard cases requires sound judgment on the part of decision-makers. Once they leave the original setting, it would be incumbant upon them to agree that as problems arise they will design interpretive and enforcement mechanisms to insure that the intent of the political sovereignty principle is promoted in the relations between states. It is up to real states in the real international system to devise specific rules to give the principle content, a virtual impossibility in the original setting since

SOME FAINT LETTERS

the parties do not know the particular problems that will arise in the future. Their failure to set the principle in motion leaves them with the present conditions of international society and the risk-role of states. If they are incapable of giving substantive content to the principle, they revert back to the very conditions which they explicitly rejected by entering the original setting.

Devising procedures for the realization of the second principle involves additional complexities. First, how are the advantaged and disadvantaged states to be identified? Second, once they are identified, what additional requirements, if any, would be necessary to guarantee to all states a minimum level of opportunities to better their positions in the international system.

Least advantaged states cannot be identified until decision-makers return to their respective states. Once they have returned and are operating in the "real" international system, it will be impossible to define the least-advantaged states without being arbitrary. For example, are those states with the lowest combined index of opportunities the appropriate perspective? Another possibility is to take an average of those states with the lowest per capita G.N.P. A third alternative is to define this group in terms of an index of opportunities that falls below the median taken over all states in the system. There are numerous other possibilities. Whatever the criterion selected, the adoption of the difference principle requires that inequalities in the distribution of opportunities benefit the least-advantaged group of states.

The difference principle, as specified and selected in the original setting, is not strong enough to guarantee sufficient opportunities to all states. It merely requires that disadvantaged states gain opportunities

SOME FAINT LETTERS

whenever advantaged states do. As it stands, Japan could gain vast opportunities in a trade arrangement with Brazil as long as Brazil gains something. The difference principle, as accepted, justifies incredible differences in opportunities. Even though decision-makers are posited as being disinterested in where their states are positioned vis-a-vis other states, and though they are primarily concerned with improving their own states positions relative to previous positions, they are not indifferent to the distribution of what may be in their national interests. They prefer more opportunities to less. The less opportunities a state accumulates from its trade, economic and political relations with other states, the less chance it has of improving its position. Disadvantaged states would be particularly concerned with the limited opportunities generated through the difference principle. They cannot better their positions in the international system when their limited opportunities must be spent on feeding their people and developing a domestic economy strong enough to compete on the international markets. To return to the analogy with Monopoly, it appears that the disadvantaged states would only have one die to role instead of two. Even cartel formation and economic integration would not necessarily generate the amount of opportunities required.

It is evident that the least-advantaged states would demand a stronger distributive principle than the one to which they agreed in the original setting. They may choose, for example, to strengthen the difference principle by requiring that all future competitions over increased opportunities be proportionately of more benefit to the least-advantaged states than to those well-off. This may be called the greatest expected benefit clause. As an example, Brascan Limited of Canada would

SOME FAINT LETTERS

only be allowed to operate in Brazil on the condition that supplying electricity to Brazilians would increase Brazil's opportunities more than Brascan's North American shareholders. In any joint venture between an advantaged state and a disadvantaged state the principle directs that interaction result in the greatest expected benefit to the latter.

This is a difficult principle to apply for the following reason: insufficient gains in opportunities provide little incentive for the most advantaged states to trade. If they can manage to trade with other advantaged states for the goods they need or if they can develop these goods through concerted self-sufficiency policies, then the disadvantaged states would be forced to trade betweer themselves for the goods they need. Now due to the fact that many of the developing states produce the same resources and food stuffs, as in the case of the Central American states, it is unlikely that their mutual trades would improve their prospects. The disadvantaged clearly need incredible inflows of technology, industrial products and capital to increase their opportunities to better their positions. The greatest expected benefit clause is unlikely to help the developing countries because of the incentive barrier.

A more reasonable alternative might be the development of an opportunity floor. The opportunity floor could be set at the minimum level of opportunities required for a state to improve its position in the international system. A problem with this alternative is the exact location of the opportunity floor. Should it be set at the average per capita G.N.P. taken over all states? Or is it the kind of principle that would require adjustment to the particular conditions in each disadvantaged state? A second problem is the extent of transfers to be made

SOME FAINT LETTERS

from the advantaged to the disadvantaged group of states. If these are too high the burden of commitment to the opportunity floor would be too great for the advantaged states. At some point the benefits derived from increased G.N.P. in the advantaged states would no longer outweigh the drawbacks of transferring away these increased opportunities to disadvantaged states.

Acceptance of an opportunity floor, from a practical point of view, hinges on at least these two factors: first, how necessary is it for the fortunate group of states to keep the disadvantaged in the competition for increased opportunities? Second, how scarce are the resources the advantaged states need to increase their own opportunities? In regard to the first question, the argument can be made that the advantaged states have a direct stake in the development of the less fortunate. The larger the consumer classes are in these states, the more goods they can purchase from industrial states. If the advantaged states overproduce for their own countries, they would have a place to trade these goods as consumer demand increases in the developing countries.

A more promising argument, however, is that the advantaged states would accept an opportunity floor because of the threat of O.P.E.C.-type cartels. In the future, these could include uranium, copper, and even bananas. International society is increasingly becoming inter-dependent.[1]

---

[1] This is open to debate, and is dependent upon the kind of evidence utilized to ascertain interdependency. For a view contrary to my own see Karl Deutsch, The Nerves of Government (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1966), p. x. Also see Robert Lieber, Theory and World Politics (Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop Publishers, 1972), p. 80. For a view corresponding to mine see Edward Morse, "Crisis Diplomacy, Interdependence, and the Politics of International Economic Relations," in R. Tanter and R. Ullman, ed., Theory and Policy in International Relations (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 133-136.

SOME FAINT LETTERS

Since no state is entirely self-sufficient, not even the advantaged states, each needs the cooperation of others to generate opportunities. Why should the states that are least well-off cooperate in a venture which provides so few opportunities to them that all of these assets must be spent on the necessities of life and none on the well-being of their states? A state cannot better its position in the international system in these circumstances. Thus, the powerful weapon of the disadvantaged states is "cartelism". If the well-off states expect the cooperation of the least-advantaged for the raw materials they require, then they must expect to bargain under fairer conditions with these states. The opportunity floor, where the advantaged group of states donates some established percentage of their yearly G.N.P. to the developing states (the U.N. has established seven-tenths of one percent as the target), seems to be the minimum acceptable condition for the disadvantaged states to participate. Thus, the difference principle, as accepted in the original setting, guarantees insufficient opportunities to the disadvantaged states. It must be supplemented with an opportunity floor, sufficient to insure the prospects of all states to increase their opportunities.

Even if states in the present international system agreed to the difference principle in an original setting and to an opportunity floor later, guaranteeing fair interpretations and compliance with these distributive principles involves insurmountable difficulties at this time. For example, what is to prevent a corrupt regime from dealing with the multinational corporations on an unequal footing? Presently, the regime gains personal fortune through bribes but the state loses increased opportunities. How is the pricing of international commodities to be

SOME FAINT LETTERS

arranged so that the disadvantaged states gain opportunities? What kinds of goods would have to be re-allocated to fulfill the requirements of the opportunity floor? Should a state be maintained at the opportunity floor if it squanders away its newly obtained opportunities through political corruption and mismanagement? Finally, how are conflicts of interest over the distribution of opportunities to be adjudicated? Appropriate institutions would be required to resolve these difficult questions.

Decision-makers generally want to adopt acts and policies that are in the national interests of their respective states. They want to maintain and increase the opportunities of their states to improve upon their previous positions in the international system. Rules of justice in international relations specify the kind of environment in which states are allowed to pursue opportunities. There are several alternatives. One of them is for states to follow the implicit rules of the present system. A consequence of this system is that no state is free from the threat of external economic or militaristic penetration. States are subject to the risk-role with its consequent uncertainties. Another consequence of this system is that the superpowers play the greatest part in controlling the system. A second alternative is for states to choose a Leviathan to make and enforce rules of justice; but world government still seems to be a distant dream of a few world federalists.

The political sovereignty principle and the difference principle, conjoined with an appropriate opportunity floor, rest somewhere between the rules of the present international system and those of Leviathan. What is attractive about the two principles is that they follow from a contract setting that is fair and to no decision-maker's advantage.

SOME FAINT LETTERS

Though states would not benefit from everything required by the principles, it has been argued that the advantages of compliance outweigh the disadvantages. To fail to give substantive content to the agreed upon principles in the present international system is to admit that decision-makers of states cannot mitigate the gross injustices in the present relations between states. And there is no peace in an unjust international structure.

SOME FAINT LETTERS

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS

Raymond Aron, Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations (N.Y.: Frederick Praeger, 1968).

Michael Barkun, Law Without Sanctions (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

Brian Barry, The Liberal Theory of Justice (London: Oxford University Press, 1973).

Brian Barry, Political Argument (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965).

Bernard Baumrin (ed.), Hobbes's Leviathan (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1969).

Hugo Bedau (ed.), Justice and Equality (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971).

Daryl J. Bem, Beliefs, Attitudes, and Human Affairs (Belmont, California: Brooks/Cole, 1970)

S. I. Benn and R. S. Peters, The Principles of Political Thought (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1965).

Otto A. Bird, The Idea of Justice (N.Y.: Praeger, 1967).

Kenneth E. Boulding, Conflict and Defense (N.Y.: Harper Torchbooks, 1963).

Richard B. Brandt (ed.), Social Justice (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962).

May Brodbeck (ed.), Readings in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences (Toronto: Collier-Macmillan Canada, 1970).

Edmund Cahn, The Sense of Injustice (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1949).

Peter Calvocoressi, International Politics Since 1945 (N.Y.: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968).

Edward Hallett Carr, The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939 (N.Y.: Harper Torchbooks, 1964).

Louis Coser, The Functions of Social Conflict (London: The Free Press, 1956).

SOME FAINT LETTERS

Robert Dahl, Modern Political Analysis, Third edition (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976).

Norman Daniels (ed.), Reading Rawls (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975).

Karl Deutsch, The Nerves of Government (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1966).

James E. Dougherty and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff (ed.), Contending Theories of International Relations (N.Y.: J. P. Lippincott, 1971).

H. Edward English, research director, World Trade and Trade Policy, Vol. 1 (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1968).

John C. Farrell and Asa P. Smith (ed.), Image and Reality in World Politics, (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1967).

Philippa Foot (ed.), Theories of Ethics (London: Oxford University Press, 1967).

William T. R. Fox (ed.), Theoretical Aspects of International Relations (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959).

Joseph Frankel, National Interest (London: Macmillan and Co., 1970).

Joseph Frankel, Contemporary International Theory (London: Oxford University Press, 1973).

William K. Frankena, Ethics, second edition (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973).

W. Friedmann, Legal Theory, Fifth edition (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1970).

David P. Gauthier (ed.), Morality and Rational Self-Interest (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970).

Morris Ginsberg, On Justice in Society (London: Heineman Educational Books, 1965).

Ronald Grimsley, The Philosophy of Rousseau (London: Oxford University Press, 1973).

Wolfram F. Hanrieder (ed.), Comparative Foreign Policy (N.Y.: David Mackay Co., 1971).

R. M. Hare, Freedom and Reason (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).

H. L. A. Hart, The Concept of Law (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961).

Virginia Held, The Public Interest and Individual Interests (N.Y.: Basic Books, 1970).

John H. Herz, International Politics in the Atomic Age (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1967).

SOME FAINT LETTERS

F. H. Hinsley, Power and the Pursuit of Peace (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967).

Thomas Hobbes, Man and Citizen (N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1972).

Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan (N.Y.: Washington Square Press, 1969).

L. T. Hobhouse, Liberalism (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).

Stanley Hoffman, The State of War (N.Y.: Frederick Praeger, 1965).

K. J. Holsti, International Politics, Second edition (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972)

David Hume, Hume's Moral and Political Philosophy (N.Y.: Hafner Publishing Co., 1972).

Immanuel Kant, The Philosophy of Kant (N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1949).

Morton A. Kaplan, System and Process in International Politics (N.Y.: John Wiley and Sons, 1967).

Hans Kelson, What is Justice? (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960).

George Kennan, Realities of American Foreign Policy (N.Y.: W. W. Norton and Co., 1966).

George Kennan, American Diplomacy, 1900-1950 (N.Y.: Mentor Books, 1957).

Robert O. Keohane and Joseph J. Nye (ed.), Transnational Relations and World Politics (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973).

Klaus Knorr and James N. Rosenau (ed.), Contending Approaches to International Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).

Joel Larus (ed.), From Collective Security to Preventive Diplomacy (N.Y.: John Wiley and Sons, 1965).

Harold D. Lasswell, Power and Personality (N.Y.: Viking Press, 1969).

Robert Lieber, Theory and World Politics (Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop Publishers, 1972).

John Locke, The Second Treatise of Government (N.Y.: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1952).

David Lyons, Forms and Limits of Utilitarianism (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).

David S. McLellan, William C. Olson, Fred A. Sonderman, Fourth edition, The Theory and Practice of International Relations (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974).

Charles A. McClelland, Theory and the International System (N.Y.: The Macmillan Co., 1966).

John Stuart Mill, Essential Works of John Stuart Mill (Bantam Books, 1965).

David Mitrany, A Working Peace System (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966).

George Modelski, Principles of World Politics (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1972).

Patrick M. Morgan, Theories and Approaches to International Politics (San Ramon, California: Concensus Publishers, 1972).

Hans J. Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, Fourth edition (N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967).

Hans J. Morgenthau, Politics in the Twentieth Century, abridged ed., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971).

Hans Morgenthau, In Defense of the National Interest (N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951).

N. M. L. Nathan, The Concept of Justice (London: Macmillan and Co., 1971).

Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society (N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960).

Reinhold Niebuhr, Christian Realism and Politics Problems (N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953).

Robert Nozick, Anarchy, State and Utopia (N.Y.: Basic Books, 1974).

Frederick A. Olafson (ed.), Justice and Social Polity (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1961).

Felix E. Oppenheim, Moral Principles in Political Philosophy (N.Y.: Random House, 1968).

Robert Osgood, Ideals and Self-Interest in America's Foreign Relations (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953).

Talcott Parsons, The Structure of Social Action (N.Y.: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1949).

C. H. Perelman, Justice (N.Y.: Random House, 1967).

Ralph Barton Perry, Realms of Value, A Critique of the Theory of a Political Concept (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954).

R. S. Peters (ed.), Hobbes and Rousseau (N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1972).

Hanna Pitkin, Wittgenstein and Justice (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

SOME FAINT LETTERS

John Plamenatz, Man and Society, Vol. 1 and 2 (London: Longmans, Green and Co.; 1969).

John Plamenatz, Consent, Freedom, and Political Obligation, Second edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1968).

D. D. Raphael, Problems of Political Philosophy (London: Macmillan and Co., 1970).

John Rawls, A Theory of Justice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971).

Nicholas Rescher, Distributive Justice (N.Y.: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1966).

Jean Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract and Discourses (N.Y.: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1950).

Bruce M. Russett, Trends in World Politics (N.Y.: The Macmillan Co., 1965).

Thomas C. Schelling, The Strategy of Conflict (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).

Andrew M. Scott, The Functioning of the International Political System (N.Y.: The Macmillan Co., 1970).

Richard Snyder et al., Foreign Policy Decision Making: An Approach to the Study of International Politics (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1962).

Richard W. Sterling, Macropolitics: International Relations in a Global Society (N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974).

Julius Stone, Human Law and Human Justice (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1968).

William Wallace, Foreign Policy and the Political Process (London: Macmillan and Co., 1971).

Kenneth N. Waltz, Man, the State, and War (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1965).

G. J. Warnock, Contemporary Moral Philosophy (London: Macmillan and Co., 1969).

Bernard Williams, Morality: An Introduction to Ethics (N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1972).

Arnold Wolfers, Discord and Collaboration (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1965).

SOME FAINT LETTERS

ARTICLES

Raymond Aron, "What is a Theory of International Relations?", in J. Farrell and A. Smith (ed.), Theory and Reality in International Relations (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1967).

K. J. Arrow, "Some Ordinalist-Utilitarian Notes on Rawls's Theory of Justice," Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 70 (May, 1973).

Brian Barry, "The Public Interest," in Anthony Quinton (ed.) Political Philosophy (London: Oxford University Press, 1973).

Theodore M. Benditt, "The Concept of Interest in Political Theory," Political Theory, Vol. 3, No. 3 (August, 1975).

S. I. Benn, "Interests in Politics," Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Vol. 60 (1960).

Lars Bergström, "What is a Conflict of Interest," Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 7 (1970).

Allan Bloom, "Justice: John Rawls vs The Tradition of Political Philosophy," American Political Science Review, Vol. 69 (June 1975).

Hedley Bull, "Order vs. Justice in International Society," Political Studies, Vol. 19, No. 3 (September, 1971).

Hedley Bull, "International Theory: The Case for a Classical Approach," World Politics, Vol. 18, No. 3 (April, 1966).

John W. Chapman, "Rawls's Theory of Justice," American Political Science Review, Vol. 69 (June, 1975).

Percy E. Corbett, "National Interest, International Organization and American Foreign Policy," World Politics, No. 1 (October, 1952).

Peter Danielson, "Theories, Institutions and the Problem of World-Wide Distribution of Justice," Philosophy of Social Science, Vol. 3 (December, 1973).

Desmond P. Ellis, "The Hobbesian Problem of Order: A Critical Appraisal of the Normative Solution," American Sociological Review, Vol. 36 (August, 1971).

Richard A. Falk, "The Domains of Law and Justice," International Journal, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Winter 1975-1976).

Joel Feinberg, "Duty and Obligation in the Non-Ideal World," Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 70 (May, 1973).

James Fishkin, "Justice and Rationality: Some Objections to the Central Argument in Rawls's Theory," American Political Science Review, Vol. 69 (June, 1975).

SOME FAINT LETTERS

Charles Fried, "Justice and Liberty," in Carl Friedrich (ed.), Nomos, Justice (N.Y.: Atherton Press, 1963).

Norman Frohlich, "Self-Interest or Altruism, What Difference?" Journal of Conflict Resolution, Vol. 18, No. 1 (March, 1974).

Johan Galtung, "A Structural Theory of Integration," Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 5, No. 4 (1968).

Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1969).

R. M. Hare, "Rawls' Theory of Justice - II," The Philosophical Quarterly (July, 1973).

Jonathan Harrison, "Utilitarianism, Universalism and Our Duty to be Just," Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Vol. 52 (1952-1953).

John C. Harsanyi, "Can the Maximin Principle Serve as a Basis for Morality: A Critique of John Rawls's Theory," American Political Science Review, Vol. 69 (June, 1975).

H. L. A. Hart, "Are There Any Natural Rights?" in Anthony Quinton (ed.), Political Philosophy (London: Oxford University Press, 1973).

K. J. Holsti, "Retreat from Utopia: International Relations Theory, 1945-1970," Canadian Journal of Political Science, Vol. 4, No. 2 (June, 1971).

Morton Kaplan, "The New Great Debate: Traditional vs. Science in International Relations," in Klaus Knorr and James N. Rosenau (ed.), Contending Approaches in International Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).

Michael Lessnoff, "John Rawls' Theory of Justice," Political Studies, Vol. 14 (March, 1971).

David Lyons, "Rawls versus Utilitarianism," Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 69, No. 18 (October, 1972).

James M. McCormick, "Evaluating Models of Crisis Behavior: Some Evidence from the Middle East," International Studies Quarterly, Vol. 19, No. 1 (March, 1975).

David Miller and Russel Keat, "Understanding Justice," Political Theory, Vol. 2 (Feb., 1974).

George Modelski, "Agraria and Industria: Two Models of the International System," in Klaus Knorr and Sidney Verba (ed.), The International System (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961).

Hans Morgenthau, "Another Great Debate," American Political Science Review, (Dec., 1952).

Hans Morgenthau, "The Yardstick of the National Interest," The Annals, Vol. 296 (Nov., 1954).

SOME FAINT LETTERS

Edward Morse, "Crisis Diplomacy, Interdependence, and the Politics of International Economic Relations," in R. Tanter and R. Ullman (ed.), Theory and Policy in International Relations (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).

Thomas Nagel, "Rawls on Justice," The Philosophical Review, Vol. 82 (April, 1973).

Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Moral Issue in International Relations," unpublished paper cited in Robert Good, "The National Interest and Political Realism: Niebuhr's Debate with Morgenthau and Kennan," Journal of Politics, Vol. 22 (June, 1960).

Felix Oppenheim, "Egalitarianism as a Descriptive Concept," American Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. 7 (April, 1970).

John Plamenatz, "Interests," Political Studies, Vol. 2 (1954).

Donald J. Puchala, "International Politics in the 1970's: The Search for a Perspective," International Organization (Spring, 1974).

John Rawls, "Constitutional Liberty," in Carl Friedrich (ed.), Nomos 6: Justice (N.Y.: Atherton Press, 1963).

John Rawls, "Distributive Justice," in Peter Laslett and W. G. Runciman, Philosophy, Politics and Society, First Series (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967).

John Rawls, "Justice As Fairness," in Peter Laslett and W. G. Runciman, Second Series, Philosophy, Politics and Society (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969).

John Rawls, "Reply to Lyons and Teitelman, Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 69, No. 18 (Oct., 1972).

J. Rawls, "Two Concepts of Rules," Philosophical Review, Vol. 64 (1955).

John Rawls, "Some Reasons for the Maximin Criterion," American Economic Review, Vol. 64 (May, 1974).

Thomas W. Robinson, "A National Interest Analysis of Sino-Soviet Relations," International Studies Quarterly, Vol. 11 (June, 1967).

James Rosenau, "National Interest," in International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, Vol. 11 (N.Y.: The Macmillan Company and The Free Press, 1968).

James Rosenau, "Pre-Theories and Theories of Foreign Policy," in James Rosenau, The Scientific Study of Foreign Policy (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1971).

David Lewis Schaefer, "The Sense and the Non-Sense of Justice: An Examination of John Rawls' Theory of Justice," The Political Science Reviewer, Vol. 3 (Fall, 1973).

SOME FAINT LETTERS

David Singer, "Inter-Nation Influence: A Formal Model," in James Rosenau (ed.), International Politics and Foreign Policy, revised ed., (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1969).

Warner Schilling, "The Clarification of Ends, or Which Interest is the National," World Politics, Vol. 9 (Oct., 1956).

James Speer, "Hans Morgenthau and the World State," World Politics, No. 2 (Jan., 1968).

Harold and Margaret Sprout, "Environmental Factors in the Study of International Politics," in James Rosenau (ed.), International Politics and Foreign Policy, revised edition (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1969).

Michael Teitelman, "The Limits of Individualism," Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 69, No. 18 (Oct., 1972).

Kenneth Thompson, "Normative Theory in International Relations," in John C. Farrell and Asa P. Smith (ed.), Theory and Reality in International Relations (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1967).

Vernon Van Dyke, "Justice as Fairness: For Groups?", American Political Science Review, Vol. 69 (June, 1975).

Vernon Van Dyke, "Values and Interests," American Political Science Review, Vol. 56, No. 3 (September, 1962).

Sidney Verba, "Assumptions of Rationality and Non-Rationality in Models of the International System," in Klaus Knorr and Sidney Verba (ed.) The International System (Princeton, N.Y.: Princeton University Press, 1961)

SOME FAINT LETTERS

Appendix

An Examination of Those Critical of the Concept of Interest in International Relations

After having discussed the literature on the concept of interest in international relations it would be less than thorough not to discuss briefly those critical of the concept. While no comprehensive critique of "the national interest" has been attempted, two well-know writers, Raymond Aron and James Rosenau, question whether the concept has any validity whatsoever.[1] Their criticisms are directed at the general vagueness of the term and they argue that "the national interest" is useless as an analytic tool because it implies a value orientation.[2] Though critical of the concept, neither writer is prepared to offer alternative explanations of it. Furthermore, even if "the national interest" is vacuous it would still have to be shown that the expression, "x is in A's national interests", is without meaning.

Raymond Aron contends that the concept is useless because it cannot be determined independently of the decision-makers in power. Also, he claims that the panoply of ends of states prohibits a rational definition of "the national interest". "The plurality of concrete objectives and of ultimate objectives," Aron suggests, "forbids a rational definition of 'national interest' even if the latter did not involve, in

---

[1] See Raymond Aron, Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations (N.Y.: Frederick Praeger, 1968) and James Rosenau, "National Interest," in International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, Volume 11 (N.Y.: The Macmillan Company and The Free Pres: , 1968), pp. 34-39.

[2] James Rosenau, "National Interest", op. cit., p. 36.

SOME FAINT LETTERS

itself, the ambiguity that attaches to collective interest."[3] It should be noted that Aron thinks that a rational use of interest in international relations would have to account for the varied aims of states, a premise which remains unsubstantiated. Thus, his remarks do not justify the following conclusion: "The plurality of goals at which a political unit may aim ... make the national interest an object of study, not a criterion of action."[4] This conclusion would be true if the idea of interest in international relations only gains meaning through the expression, "the national interest". It is argued in chapter four that something being in an actor's national interests can only have meaning when it is divorced from "the national interest". The latter term does, in fact, imply an orderly sum of goals which decision-makers can articulate, whereas the expression "x is in A's national interests" implies nothing about the objectives of states.

Aron's own analysis of international relations is dependent upon the study of particular regimes and their national objectives. He leans toward the decision-making level of analysis to derive some of his conclusions about inter-state behavior. He says, "No one understands the diplomatic startegy of a state if he does not understand its regime, if

---

[3] Raymond Aron, Peace and War, op. cit., pp. 91-92. Stanley Hoffman also assumes that a useful definition of "the national interest" would have to limit and account for the objectives of states: "This concept, if it is to be useful at all, presupposes a period of stability in international relations, limited objectives, national regimes that are similar enough to have roughly similar goals, and foreign policies that can be and are free from domestic passions and pressures." See Stanley Hoffman, The State of War (N.Y.: Frederick Praeger, 1965), pp. 3-21.

[4] Raymond Aron, Ibid., p. 285.

SOME FAINT LETTERS

he has not studied the philosophy of those who govern it."[5] So at the same time that Aron criticizes the concept of "the national interest" for its unique expression in each state, he is more than prepared to concede that the study of particular regimes is important to the understanding of international relations. Since the aims of states are different, Aron seems to be saying, it is not possible to use "the national interest" framework to make generalizations about state behavior in general. But to get beyond the study of particular regimes Aron is also forced to make generalizations about state behavior. For example, he is not opposed to the description of states in collectivist terms. He says, "...[I]t does not seem to me at all unjustifiable to define nations as collective personalities... The collective personality of a nation, like the individual personality, is born and dies in time..."[6] The inference to be drawn from this statement is that pertinent remarks can be made about state conduct independent of the particular regime in power. Once the idea of collective personality is established, it becomes possible for Aron to attach central importance to key variables which any state wants to maximize such as a favorable "configuration of forces" and clearly defined spheres of influence.[7] Thus, at the same time that Aron criticizes the concept of "the national interest" because the term ignores the unique differences between states, he is prepared to generalize by offering alternative criteria which also ignore the unique

---

[5] Ibid., p. 600.

[6] Ibid., p. 700.

[7] See Raymond Aron, "What Is a Theory of International Relations?", in J. Farrell and A. Smith (ed.), Theory and Reality in International Relations (N.Y.: Columbia Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 7-9.

SOME FAINT LETTERS

characteristics and aims of states.

A rational concept of what is in an actor's national interests need not account for the disparate aims of states. If the concept is to have any validity at all, then it must be applicable to objective, generalized elements common to the behavior of all states. If the concept of interest in international relations is defined in terms of generalized means, rather than ends, then it may be possible to compare the interests of different states. An alternative explanation of the significance of interest in international relations might result. What makes Aron's argument against the idea of interest so intriguing is that his own analysis of international relations comes very close, at times, to the kind of definition necessary for a rational employment of the term. For example, he claims that,

> ... [G]rand policy wants such power not for itself, but to carry out a mission. Similarly, a collectivity does not desire power for itself, but in order to achieve some other goal -- peace, glory -- so as to influence the future of humanity, through the pride of propagating an idea.[8]

In the same place he suggests that a collectivity tries to maximize its resources and force so as to maximize its means of acting on others.[9] It is surprising that Aron does not see that such policies may provide a clue for an adequate formulation of the concept of interest in international relations.

Aron's critique of "the national interest" is relevant to the extent that many writings on the concept of interest in the discipline

---

[8] Raymond Aron, op. cit., p. 90

[9] Ibid.

SOME FAINT LETTERS

define 'interest' in terms of "the national interest". He is right to point out that no criterion of "the national interest" can account for the many ends pursued by states. However, his critique falters if interest can be defined apart from "the national interest".

James Rosenau thinks that it is impossible to define "the national interest" objectively because of its inherent value orientation. In his estimation, "... [T]he national interest is rooted in values ('what is best')."[10] Like Aron, he accepts the premise that the concept of interest cannot be separated from "the national interest". Thus, he criticizes national interest writers for their inability to formulate the concept in descriptivist terms.

Rosenau presents three main reasons for the analytic failure of the concept of "the national interest". These reasons include the ambiguous nature of the state; the elusiveness of substantive criteria for determining the existence of interests; and the lack of a procedure for summing interests. In regard to the first criticism, to refer to the state when utilizing the concept of interest is no more confusing than using the state to refer to penetrated systems or issue areas, two ideas important to Rosenau's own work.[11] Rosenau's second criticism, that there exists no criteria for determining the existence of an interest, is well-taken to the extent that interests are identified with the values of a state. However, if it is possible to explain a state's interests apart from the concept of "the national interest", then his criticism may be

---

[10] James Rosenau, op. cit., p. 34.

[11] See James Rosenau, "Pre-Theories and Theories of Foreign Policy," in James Rosenau, The Scientific Study of Foreign Policy (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1971), pp. 95-149.

SOME FAINT LETTERS

overcome. If interests are described in terms of the results of acts and policies (for example), then an act which increases an actor's opportunities is in the actor's national interests. Here, at least, a criterion is offered through which interests can be analyzed; namely, an increase in opportunities. Rosenau's third criticism is not relevant to an assessment of what is in a state's interests. Though common sense would seem to indicate the need to sum a state's interests, this is only true to the extent that increased opportunities cannot be identified apart from "the national interest". If interests are defined in terms of increases in opportunities, then there would be no need to sum the interests of a state into one coherent "national interest".

As long as interest is incorporated into "the national interest" Rosenau's criticisms are valid. However, a complete critique of the idea of interest in international relations would require that careful attention be focused on possible alternative expressions of this concept. Rosenau merely assumes that, "To explain that a certain policy is in the national interest or to criticize it for being contrary to the national interest is to give an imposing label to one's own conception of what is a desirable or undesirable course of action."[12] This assumption would be valid only if interest is an evaluative concept, dependent upon the ends preferred by the speaker. Its validity collapses if what is in the national interests of a state can be identified in some other way.

A definition that focuses on the means of state behavior, which are limited and comparable, is not susceptible to the kind of criticism

---

[12] James Rosenau, "National Interest" pp. 36-37.

SOME FAINT LETTERS

that Rosenau levels at the idea of interest. A problem with Rosenau's analysis is that he sees "the national interest" as the appropriate term through which interest must be construed. Every interest becomes, for Rosenau, part of a more inclusive characterization of foreign policy.[13] If the idea of interest in international relations can be ascertained descriptively and can be applied to a part of state activity, then the difficulties attributed to its use may be surmounted.

What limits the value of Aron's and Rosenau's criticisms is that they criticize the idea of interest in international relations from the perspective of "the national interest". If it turns out that interests can be separated from the value complex of a state, then their comments on the subject could only be applied to previous writings and not to the idea of interest itself.

---

[13] Ibid., p. 34, p. 39.